

# Ms. TREE™

No. 9

WELL, MIST - IT'LL  
TAKE YOU MORE THAN  
A MINUTE TO SOLVE  
**THIS** MYSTERY!





# Notes from SURE CITY

by Jan & Dean Mullaney

## THE LATEST CONVENTION UPDATE:

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For those interested in attending the Houston Con, the dates are July 27–29. Cat and Dean made the trip to the Union's 'biggest state last year, and guarantee everyone will have a great time if they put in an appearance.

## CONVENTIONS PAST; TOO LATE FOR AN UPDATE:

We'd like to thank the friendly folks at Second Genesis Distributors in Portland, Oregon for the wonderful hospitality during our visit to their city for Phoenix II convention on May 6th. We drove the 14 hours from our home in California, and it was one of the most beautiful tours we've ever taken. Anyone who's been in Oregon knows what we mean; for those of you who've never visited the area, we recommend it highly.

We took a long weekend off so we could make the drive a leisurely one, and had the opportunity to stop off in places like Eureka in California, and Grant's Pass, Medford and Roseburg in Oregon. The Pacific Northwest is a unique place with its incredible amount of rainfall. The further north you go, the more it rains. If we ever get invited to a convention in Seattle, we'll let you know how it is *that* high up.

At any rate, Phoenix II was a great con, with plenty of funnybooks for sale, and plenty of talented artists who came out to show us their portfolios. We also had the opportunity to do some store signings at Future Dreams and Pegasus, and thanks to Don and Mike, respectively, and their customers, for the hours of interesting conversations. If you're ever up in the area, stop in and say hello to them. Comics are a thriving business in Portland thanks to guys like them, and to their distributor, Richard Finn of Second Genesis.

They'll be having another con come September, and you can find out more about it by writing Second Genesis, 1112 NE 21st Street, Portland, OR 97232. And don't forget to tell 'em we sent ya!

## HERE COMES THE FLAT FOOT FOOZLE WITH THE FLOY FLOY!

This is the month we've all been waiting for, the month in which we see the much awaited return of Klonsbon the Foozle and his pal, li'l Cap'n Quick.

There's no restraining this Foozle! From the pages of ECLIPSE MONTHLY comes the conclusion to CAP'N QUICK AND A FOOZLE. Did we say conclusion? It's only the beginning as creator Marshall Rogers launches

comicism's most bizarre characters in their own bi-monthly magazine.

We're celebrating the occasion with 32 all-new pages of graphic fantasy. No ads, nothing but non-stop action as our heroes forge the bond of their partnership and we give you the first clues as to what a young Earthling is doing hopping across the dimensions.

After you see this one, you'll wonder, "Where can they go from here?" Anywhere! According to Marshall, "We've got enough plot ideas to keep us busy until 1990!"

If you want your Foozle fix now, check out the first issue of CAP'N QUICK AND A FOOZLE, on sale this month. And if you're heading for the San Diego Con, be sure to say hello to Marshall, who's a guest of honor.

## COMING AND GOING AND MISCELLANEOUS DOINGS:

This month in ECLIPSE MONTHLY, we welcome a new artist to comics, one whom we predict will become a sudden fan fave. His name is Steve Masseroni and the strip he draws is "Steel, Stealth and Magic." Take a look at his cover for the issue and see what we mean.

Also in this issue of EM is the return of Doug Wildey's "Rio," one of the most critically acclaimed series we've ever published. And, of course, B. C. Boyer's "The Masked Man" holds down the fort.

While the seventh issue of DESTROYER DUCK was the final issue in the series, Jerry Siegel and Val Mayerik's THE STARLING lives on. We're working on the first few issues of the Starling's own magazine. As soon as we have a definite release date, we'll let you know.

Speaking of endings and beginnings, MS. TREE ends her run as an Eclipse Comic this month. But fear not, mystery lovers, she lives on in her own title to be published beginning next month by Aardvark-Vanaheim, the folks who bring you CEREBUS, NEIL THE HORSE, JOURNEY and other top-notch comics. The format will be different — two-color instead of the usual four — but we urge you to continue to give Ms. Tree, and Max and Terry, your support. We know we'll be first in line to read the latest adventures.

This month also sees the newest addition to the DNAgents Dynasty: the SURGE mini-series kicks off with the hot-headed DNAgent having left the group, only to be hunted by the police. He meets up with a sensational new character named Lancer, who's part superhero and part media superstar. He's almost too incredible to describe. Meanwhile, back in the DNAgents title, the chemicals are bubbling and could it be a new DNAgent that emerges? Sorry, but you'll have to tune in to find out. This is too big a secret to give away here!

In the third leg of the DNAgents Dynasty, Mark Evanier and Dan Spigle guide CROSSFIRE through a somewhat true story of a young girl who travels to Hollywood only to get involved with a shock horror movie producer. If it's gritty Hollywood drama you're searching for, your search is over. After writing over 200 television scripts, Mark's the one person in comics who can accurately portray the Hollywood scene. So when's he going to write a DNAgents TV series? Only time will tell, folks. Only time will tell.

And on the subject of time, we've just run out of it. See you next month.

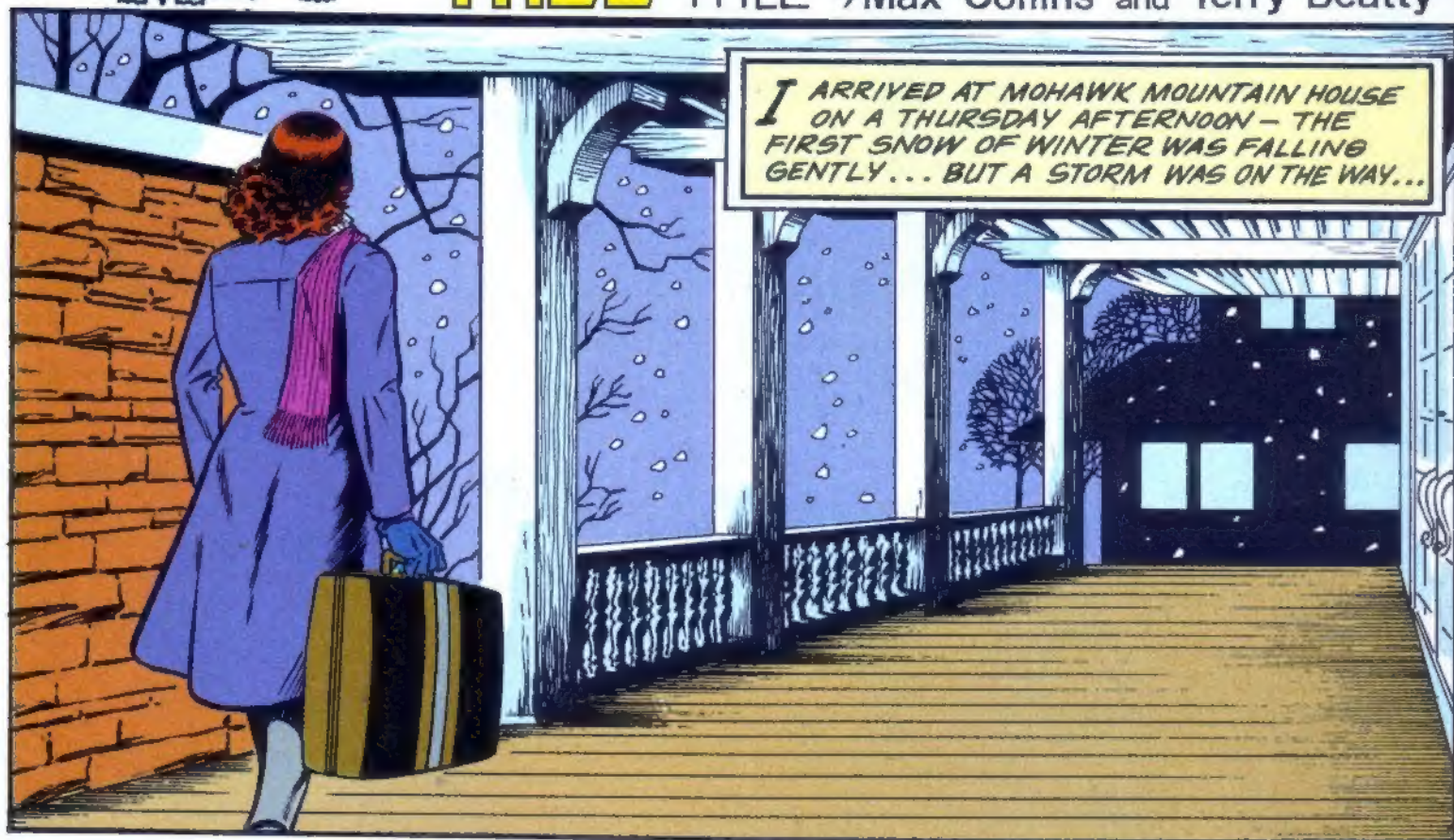


# MURDER *at* MOHAWK

PART ONE

A **MIST-TREE**

TALE © 1984  
Max Collins and Terry Beatty



I NEEDED A REST - NEEDED SOME PROVERBIAL PEACE AND QUIET, AFTER THE EVENTS OF RECENT MONTHS ... WHICH EVEN I HAD TO ADMIT HAD TAKEN THEIR TOLL ON ME...



ONE OF MY BUSINESS ASSOCIATES, ROGER FREEMONT, HAD RECOMMENDED MOHAWK - A RESORT HOTEL THAT HAD BEEN AROUND SINCE THE 1860S, TUCKED HIGH AWAY IN THE MOUNTAINS UPSTATE. THIS WAS OFF-SEASON, AND THE PLACE SHOULD BE AS RESTFUL AS A MONASTERY - BUT LESS CROWDED -



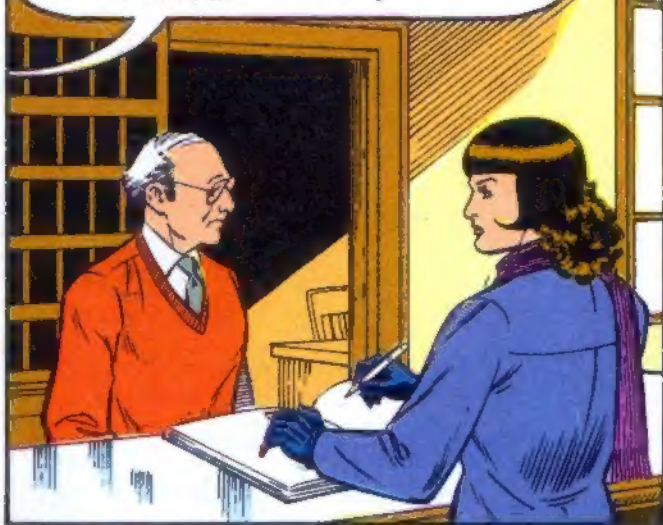
ART ASSIST & LETTERING: GARY KATO / EDITOR: DEAN MULLANEY / COLORING: JAN BRUNNER

SCANNED BY KCBURBS-DCP!



I WAS SIGNING THE GUEST REGISTER WHEN I HEARD A FAMILIAR VOICE—

MICHAEL TREE ! WHAT IS THIS, A PRIVATE EYE CONVENTION ?



IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MS. TREE—WHAT'S A NICE GIRL LIKE YOU DOING IN A MAUSOLEUM LIKE THIS ?

RESTING, MIST—SO KEEP THAT IN MIND... LET'S NOT GO STUMBLING OVER ANY CORPSES, SHALL WE ?



HEY ! WHAT KIND OF TALK IS THAT ?

BEING A CLIENT OF YOURS IS LIKE HAVING A TICKET ON THE TITANIC.



I ADMIT I'VE LOST A CLIENT OR TWO—I'VE SEEN MY SHARE OF MURDER—*MORE* THAN MY SHARE...



BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME A JINX ! CAN I HELP IT IF WHEN THE STAKES ARE HIGH, THEY CALL MIKE MIST ?

NOT TO MENTION THE CORONER—WHERE'S THE BELLBOY ?



I'LL GET THIS FOR YOU—THERE'S NO BELLBOYS, HERE.

WHY NOT ?



"IN OFF-SEASON THEY RUN THIS PLACE WITH A SKELETON CREW—THAT'S WHY THE RATES ARE SO REASONABLE; YOU COULDN'T AFFORD THIS JOINT IN THE SUMMER—ME, EITHER."

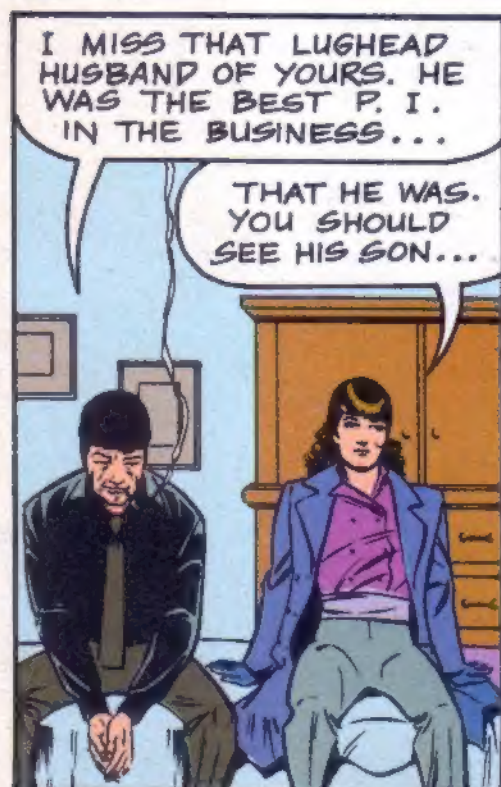


WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE, MIST ?

DOING A LITTLE BODYGUARD WORK—AND IT AIN'T A BAD BODY, EITHER—











YOU SURE PICKED  
A FUNNY PLACE TO  
RELAX, MS. TREE -

WHY? IT LOOKS  
PEACEFUL ENOUGH  
HERE -



"OH, IT'S RESTFUL, ALL  
RIGHT," MIST SAID.  
"LIKE A HAUNTED HOUSE.  
DON'T YOU KNOW ABOUT  
MOHAWK'S REPUTATION?  
ABOUT THE KARPIS GANG,  
AND THE MASSACRE?"



NO, I CAN'T  
SAY I ...

MIKE!  
WHY DON'T  
YOU INTRO-  
DUCE ME  
TO YOUR LOVELY  
FRIEND?



MICHAEL TREE,  
THIS IS DONNA LEE  
WESTLAKE, THE  
MYSTERY WRITER...  
AND MY CLIENT.



MY LATE HUSBAND  
WAS A BIG FAN  
OF YOURS,  
MS. WESTLAKE.

WELL, I'M A  
BIG FAN OF  
YOURS,  
MS. TREE -  
I SHOULD'VE  
RECOGNIZED YOU  
IMMEDIATELY!



IN FACT, IF YOU EVER  
WANT TO COLLABORATE  
ON A BOOK ON YOUR  
CAREER AS A FEMALE  
PRIVATE EYE, SAY THE  
WORD -

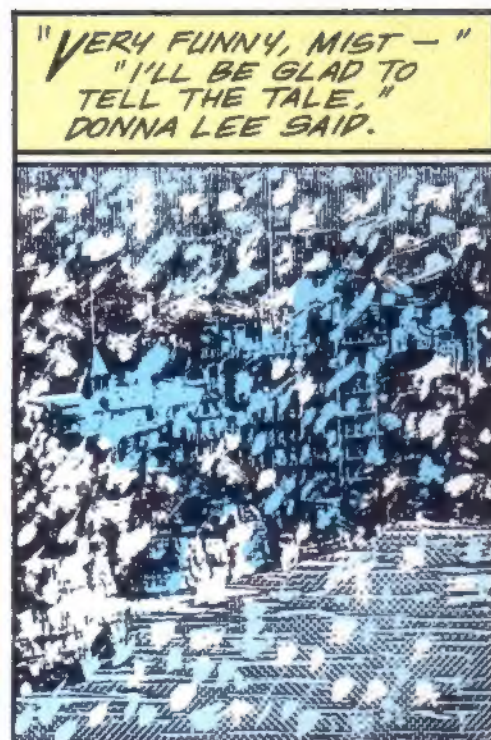


I DIDN'T KNOW YOU  
EVER DID NON-FICTION,  
MS. WESTLAKE -



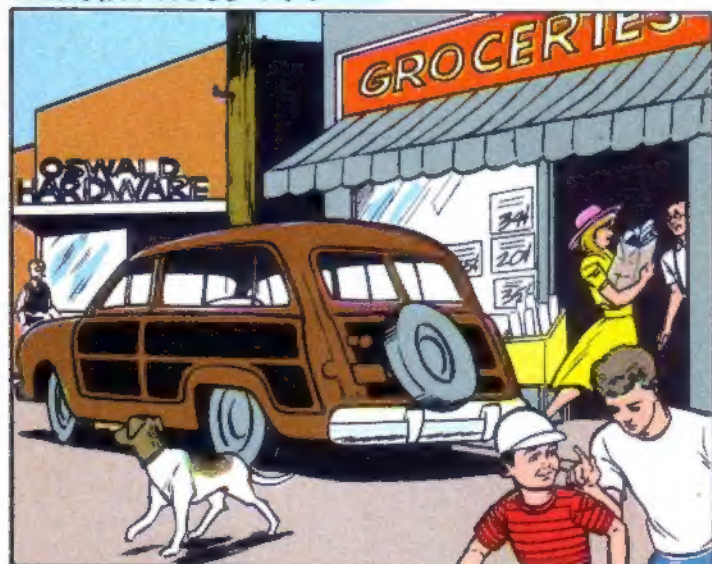
OH, I'M BRANCHING OUT INTO  
"TRUE CRIME" - IN FACT,  
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE ... TO  
RESEARCH THE  
MOHAWK MASSACRE -





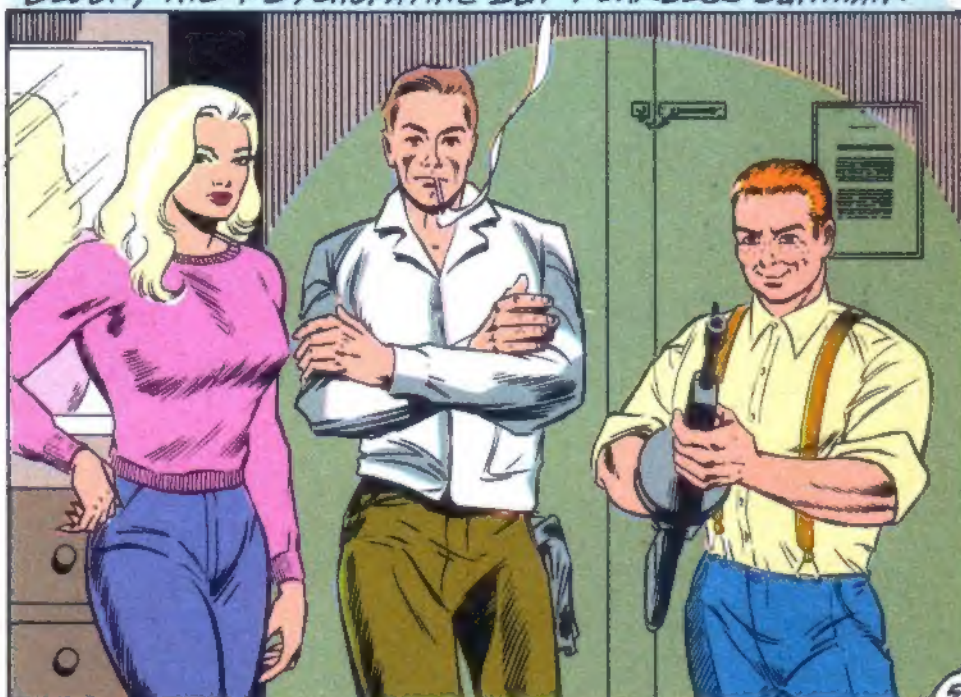
"IT WAS JUST THIRTY MILES FROM  
HERE - AND THIRTY YEARS AGO -  
IN A SLEEPY LITTLE TOWN CALLED  
GRANTWOOD..."

"THERE WAS ALSO A SLEEPY LITTLE  
BANK, IN WHICH THE SURROUNDING  
PROSPEROUS FARMING COMMUNITY  
HAD PUT A LOT OF MONEY -"



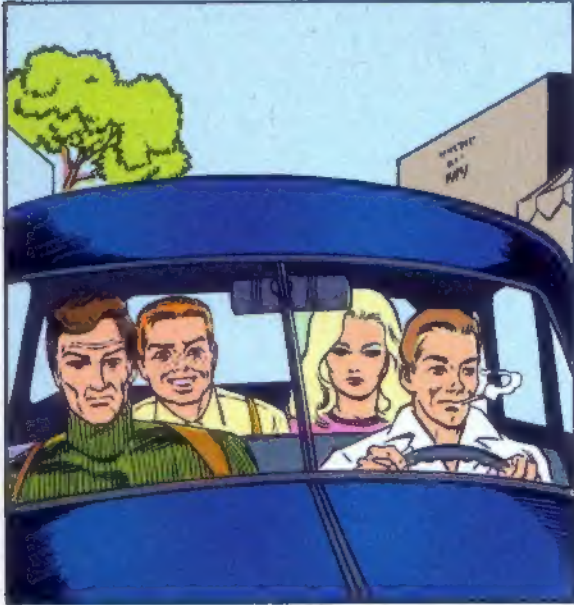
"AND THE LEGENDARY  
LATTERDAY DILLINGER  
KNOWN ONLY AS KARPIS  
PLANNED TO MAKE A  
WITHDRAWAL."

"HE HAD WITH HIM THAT DAY THREE ACCOMPLICES -  
EX-STRIPPER SELMA DEVINE, HIS MISTRESS;  
'WHEELS' COGG, THE DRIVER; AND 'BABY-FACE'  
BLOCK, THE PSYCHOPATHIC BUT FEARLESS GUNMAN."





"KARPER HAD FALLEN ON HARD TIMES — HE OWED THE SYNDICATE BOYS BIG MONEY, FOR A GAMBLING DEBT —"



"OTHERWISE, HE WOULDN'T HAVE PUT SOMETHING TOGETHER THIS HASTILY — OR WORKED WITH ANYONE AS UNSTABLE AS 'BABY-FACE.'"



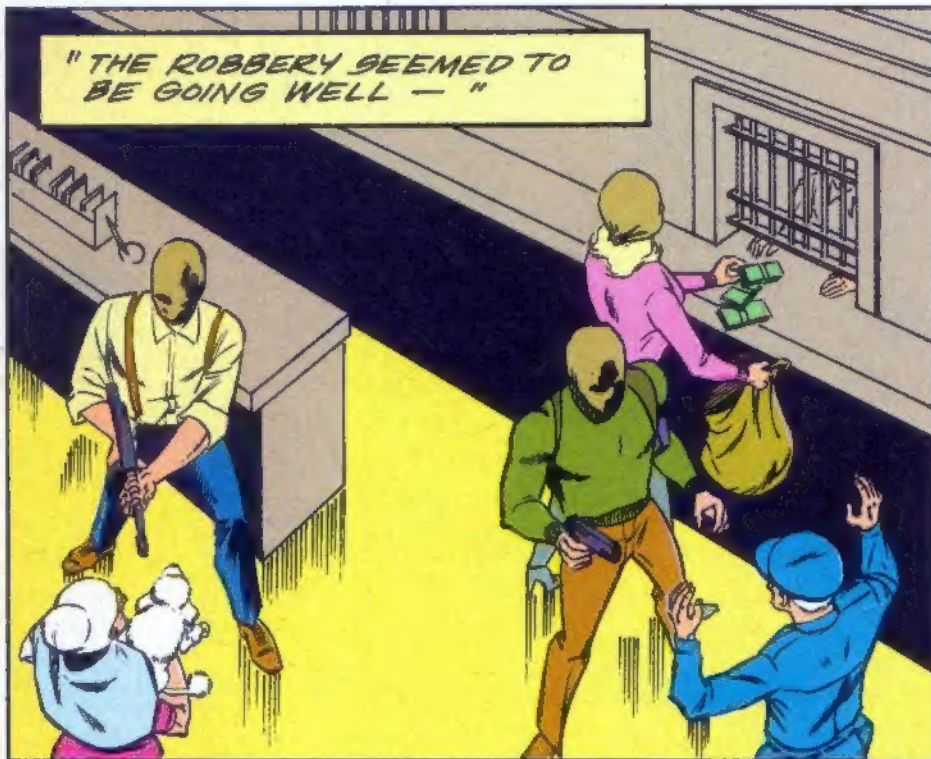
"UNNECESSARY VIOLENCE JUST WASN'T KARPER'S STYLE —"

NO ROUGH STUFF, BABY-FACE — DON'T SHOOT UNLESS YOU GET SHOT AT.

YEAH, YEAH —



"THE ROBBERY SEEMED TO BE GOING WELL —"



"TILL ONE OF THE BANK GUARDS SNEEZED —"

AH - AH - AH -



CHOO!



HE WENT FOR A GUN, KARPER — IT WASN'T MY FAULT!



WHY DON'T YOU SIGN MY NAME ON THE DOOR, YOU LITTLE PSYCHO —



"AND THEN 78-YEAR-OLD MOLLY EARLE'S PUPPY BARKED."







"AND BABY-FACE  
OVER-REACTED — "



GREAT, BABY-  
FACE - YOU KILLED  
AN OLD MAN, AN  
OLD LADY, AND A  
DOG! WE'LL HAVE  
EVERY COP IN THE  
STATE ON OUR  
BUTTS - NOT TO  
MENTION THE  
HUMANE SOCIETY!



THEY WERE HONEST  
MISTAKES.

"KARPER'S PLAN WAS TO  
SPLIT UP IN PAIRS - THEY  
CHANGED CLOTHES, GOT  
INTO SEPARATE, FRESH  
CARS; AND THEN - ONE  
PAIR AT A TIME - CHECKED  
IN AT THE MOHAWK. "



BUT IF THE MOHAWK WAS  
ONLY THIRTY MILES AWAY  
FROM THE ROBBERY SITE -



KARPER WAS  
**BOLD**  
THAT WAY -

"HE BELIEVED IN HIDING UNDER  
THE COPS' NOSES; THEY'D  
NEVER SUSPECT IT... ONLY  
THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN  
KARPER'S MISTRESS WOKE UP -"



KARPER?  
KARPER?



KARPER'S GONE!  
I'VE LOOKED ALL OVER  
THE HOTEL FOR HIM...

WHAT ABOUT  
THE **MONEY**?



IT'S... IT'S  
GONE, TOO -



WHERE'S  
BABY-  
FACE?

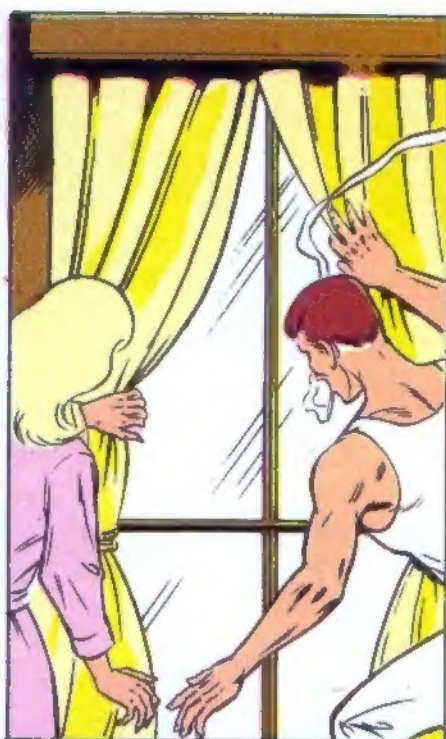
HE GOT UP TO  
GET SOMETHIN'  
TO EAT -  
WHAT'LL WE  
DO **NOW**?

GRAB YOUR  
GUNS!





THE JOINT'S SURROUND-  
ED BY COPS! WE GOTTA  
SHOOT IT OUT!



YOU GET STARTED,  
BABY-FACE — WE'LL,  
UH... GRAB OUR  
GUNS AND BE RIGHT  
BEHIND YOU...



"SO BABY-FACE  
GOT STARTED."



"AND KILLED  
TWELVE COPS —"



"BEFORE MAKING  
IT A BAKER'S  
DOZEN HIMSELF..."



AND SELMA AND WHEELS  
WENT TO JAIL — GOT  
LIFE SENTENCES.

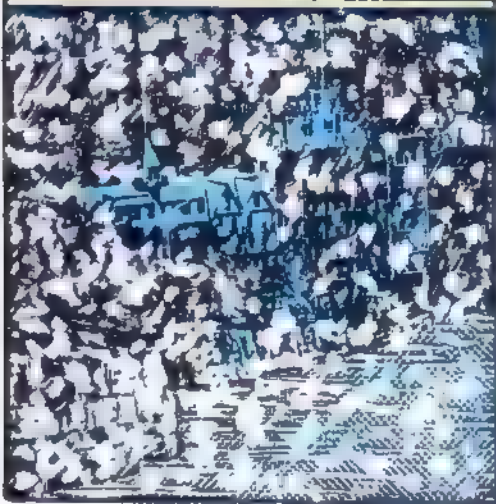
AND WHAT ABOUT  
KARPEN? AND  
THE MONEY?



NEVER SEEN AGAIN —  
NEITHER THE MAN, NOR  
THE MONEY... HALF A  
MILLION, INCIDENTALLY —



"WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH DO YOU HOPE TO DO HERE?" I ASKED. "THE CURRENT OWNERS BEGAN HERE AS MANAGERS, THIRTY YEARS AGO," SHE SAID.



THEY WERE THE MANAGERS, THEN —

YES — AND STILL ARE.



"WIDOW ABIGAIL ADDAMS AND HER BACHELOR BROTHER PICK STARKE —"



WHAT HAPPENED TO SELMA AND WHEELS? STILL IN JAIL?

THAT'S THEM THERE...



"THEY SERVED THIRTY YEARS AND WERE JUST PAROLED —"



YOU'RE KIDDING!

NO — I INVITED THEM HERE TO INTERVIEW THEM... PAID ALL THEIR EXPENSES — AND THEY AREN'T THE ONLY ONES —



SHE TOOK US UP TO SEE ANOTHER OF THE "ORIGINAL CAST" OF THE MOHAWK MASSACRE —

ELWOOD EPPERLY... HE WAS NIGHT DESK CLERK. WENT ON TO BE A SUCCESSFUL CHIROPRACTOR OUT WEST...



MY GOD!

IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN A GOOD CHIRO TO FIX THIS GUY'S NECK...





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# MIKE MIST

## Death Comes Special Delivery

A MIKE MIST / MINUTE MIST-ERY  
PRIVATE EYE © 1979 by Collins & Beatty



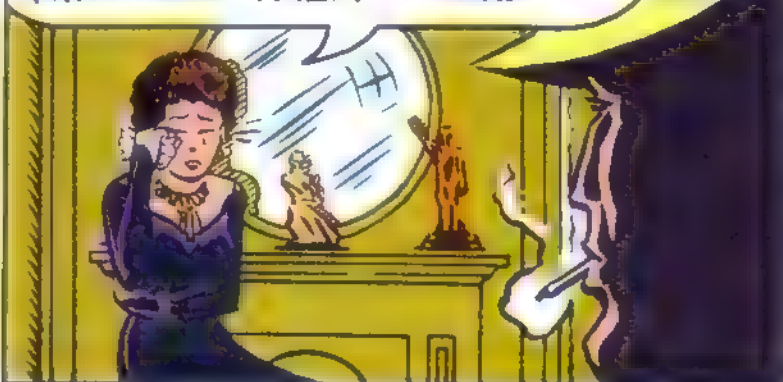
WHEN I ARRIVED AT MY CLIENTS' HOME, THE MORGUE BOYS WERE JUST LEAVING...

SAID A BLACKMAILER'S BEEN BILKING HIM.

NOT ANYMORE—  
SHOT HIMSELF.

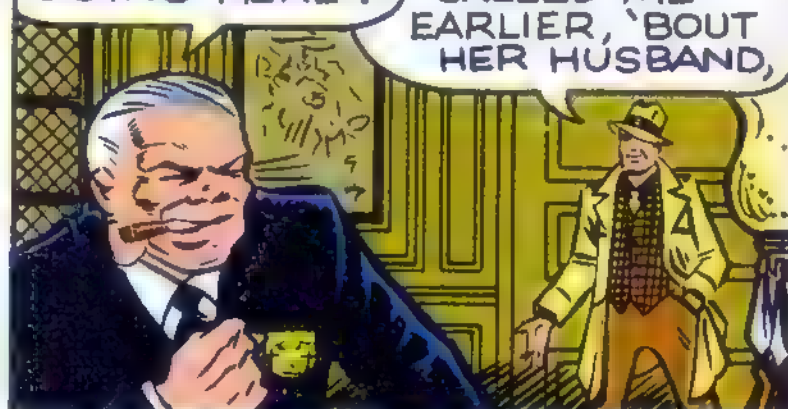


MR. MIST, I DON'T KNOW WHO WAS BLACKMAILING PETER, OR WHY—I SIMPLY TOOK HIS MAIL TO HIM AND THEN— CHOKED—

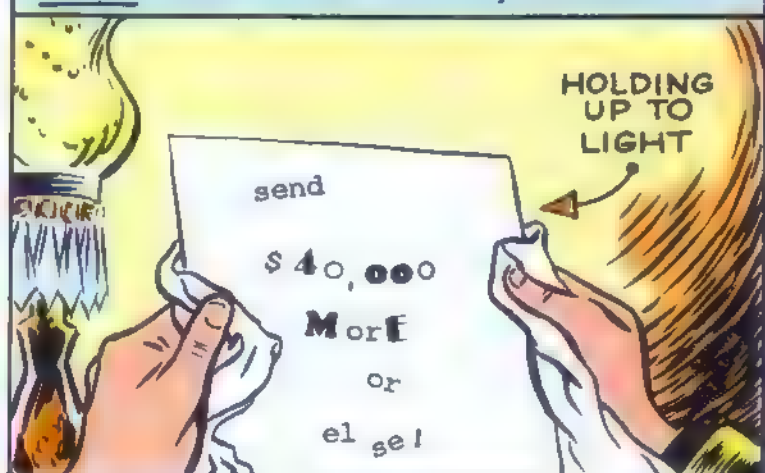


MIST! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

HI, LT. DIMM. MRS. SMYTHE CALLED ME EARLIER, 'BOUT HER HUSBAND,



"THAT CAME FOR HIM, TODAY."



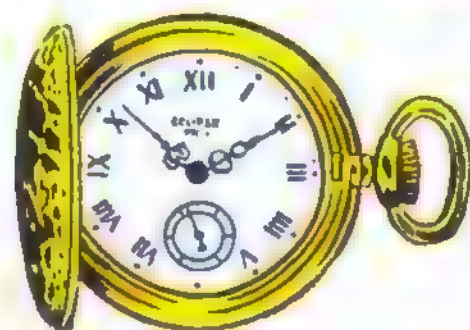
SORRY MRS. SMYTHE — CAN'T TAKE YOUR CASE... AFTER ALL, THERE IS NO "BLACKMAILER," AND I DON'T WORK FOR KILLERS!



PLANTED AFTER THE MURDER, THE "LETTER" WAS UNCREASED, LACKING A REAL LETTER'S FOLDS.



ORIGINALLY  
PUBLISHED  
SEPT. 10, 1979  
(FIRST APPEARANCE  
OF LT. DIMM)



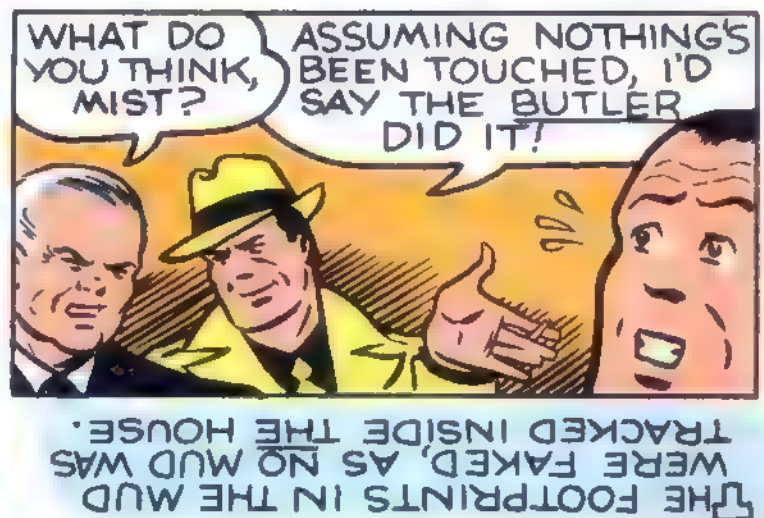
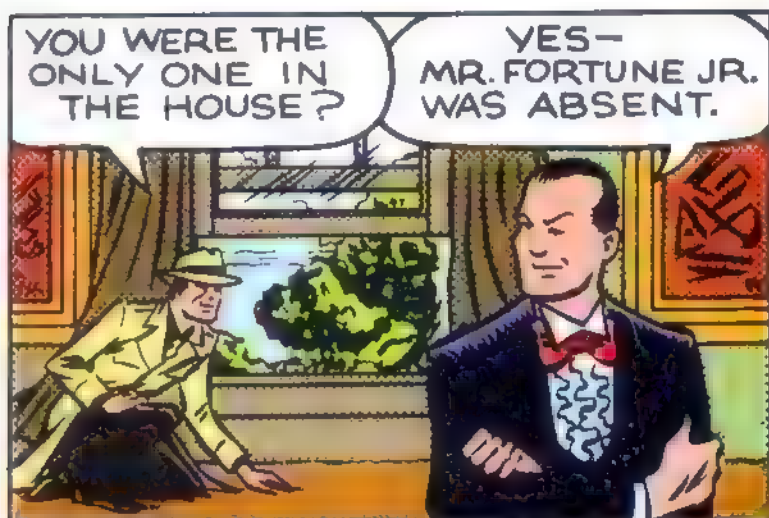
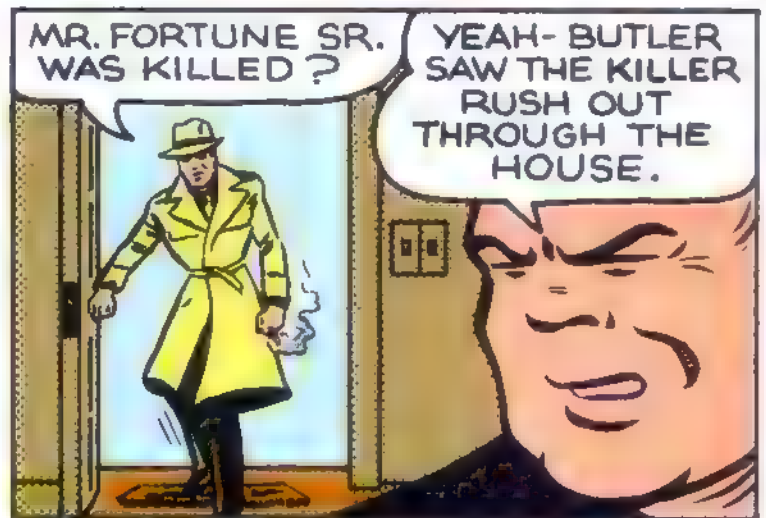
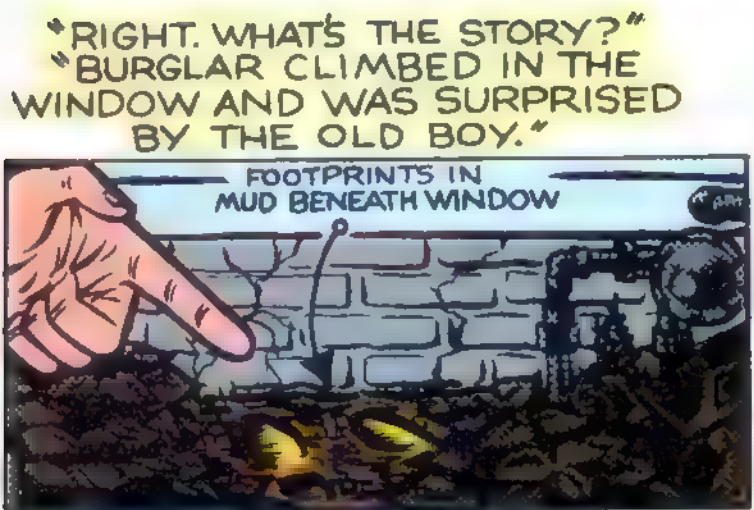
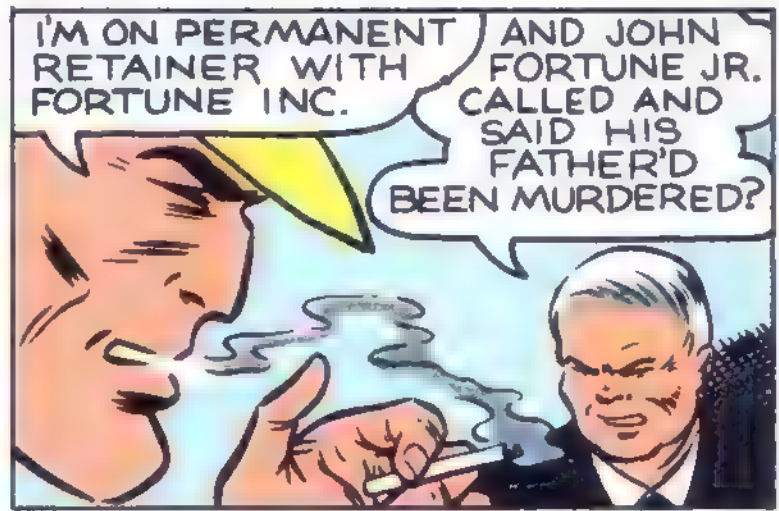


# MIKE

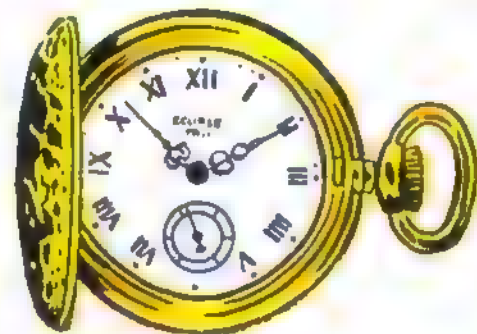
# MIST

## Murder's a Messy Business

A MIKE MIST / MINUTE MIST-ERY  
PRIVATE EYE ©1979 by Collins and Bratton



ORIGINALLY  
PUBLISHED  
SEPT. 17, 1979





# MIKE

# MIST

## His Last Act...

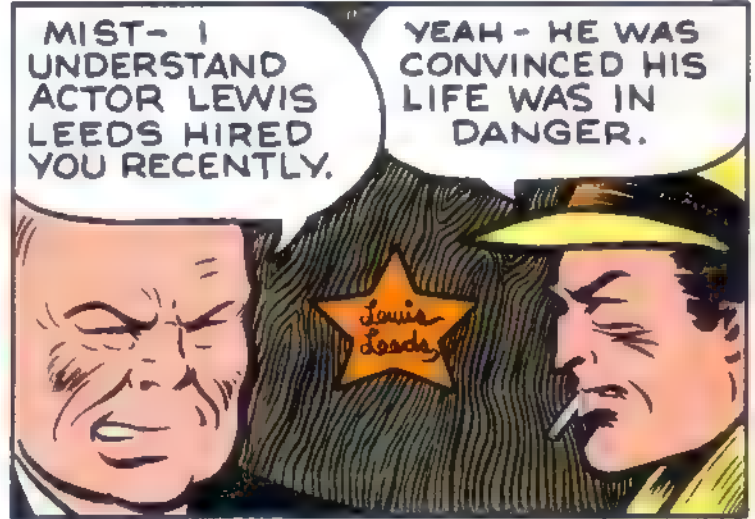
©1979

by Max Collins and Terry Beatty

A MIKE MIST / MINUTE PRIVATE EYE / MISTERY

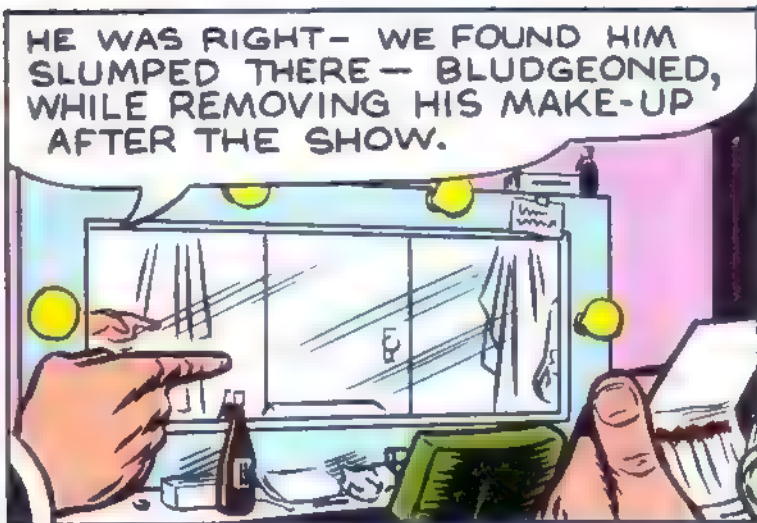


LT. DIMM CALLED ME TO THE VORRICK THEATRE - A CLIENT OF MINE WAS DEAD.

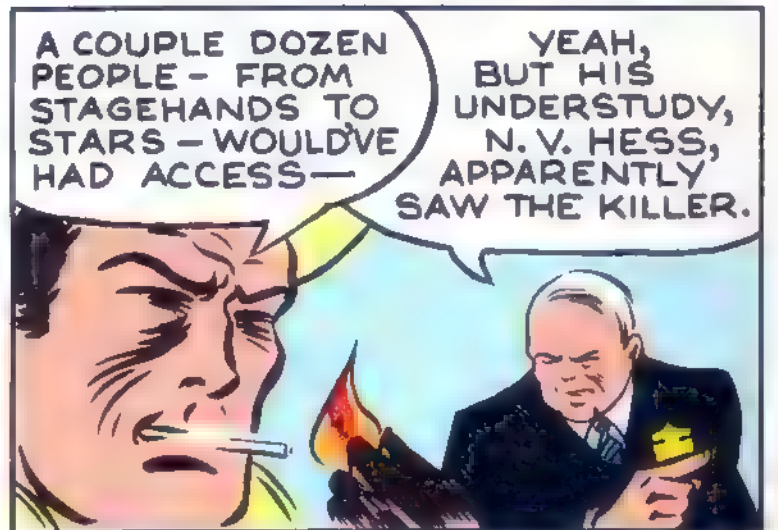


MIST - I UNDERSTAND ACTOR LEWIS LEEDS HIRED YOU RECENTLY.

YEAH - HE WAS CONVINCED HIS LIFE WAS IN DANGER.

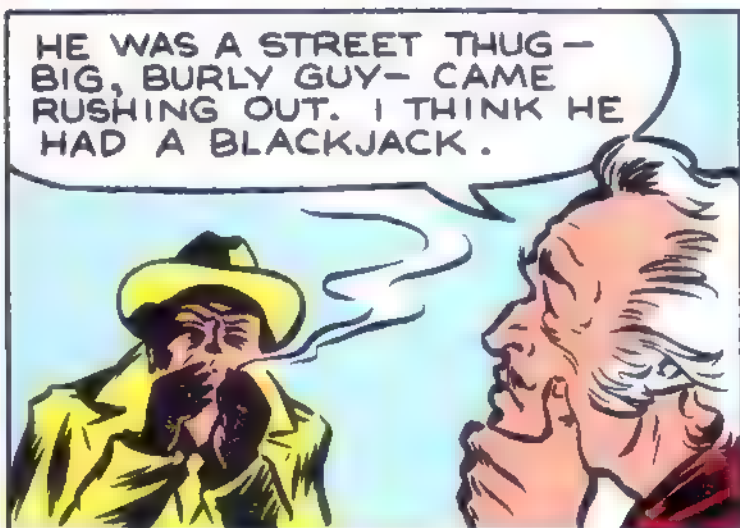


HE WAS RIGHT - WE FOUND HIM SLUMPED THERE - BLUDGEONED, WHILE REMOVING HIS MAKE-UP AFTER THE SHOW.

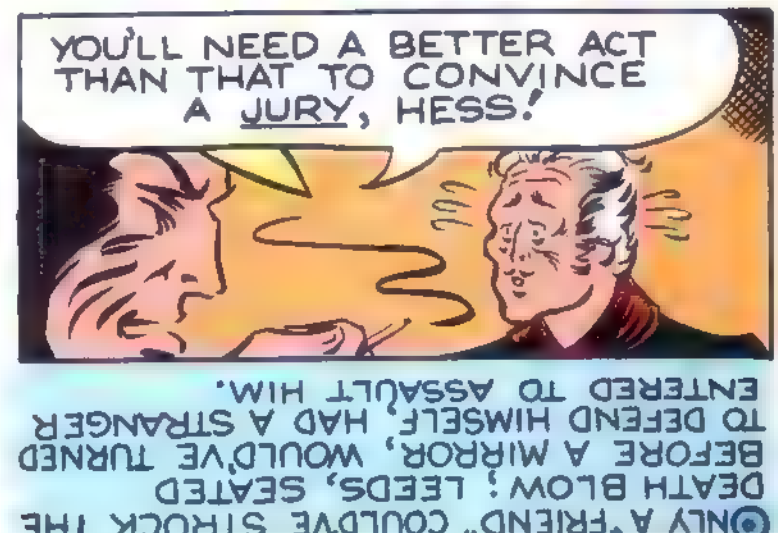


A COUPLE DOZEN PEOPLE - FROM STAGEHANDS TO STARS - WOULD'VE HAD ACCESS -

YEAH, BUT HIS UNDERSTUDY, N. V. HESS, APPARENTLY SAW THE KILLER.



HE WAS A STREET THUG - BIG, BURLY GUY - CAME RUSHING OUT. I THINK HE HAD A BLACKJACK.

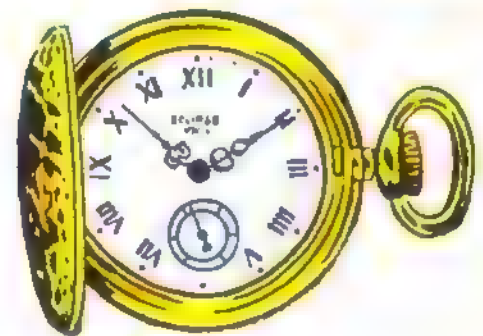


YOU'LL NEED A BETTER ACT THAN THAT TO CONVINCE A JURY, HESS!

ONLY A "FRIEND" COULDN'T STRUCK THE DEATH BLOW; LEEDS, SEATED BEFORE A MIRROR, WOULD'VE TURNED TO DEFEND HIMSELF, HAD A STRANGER ENTERED TO ASSAULT HIM.



ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED OCT. 22, 1979



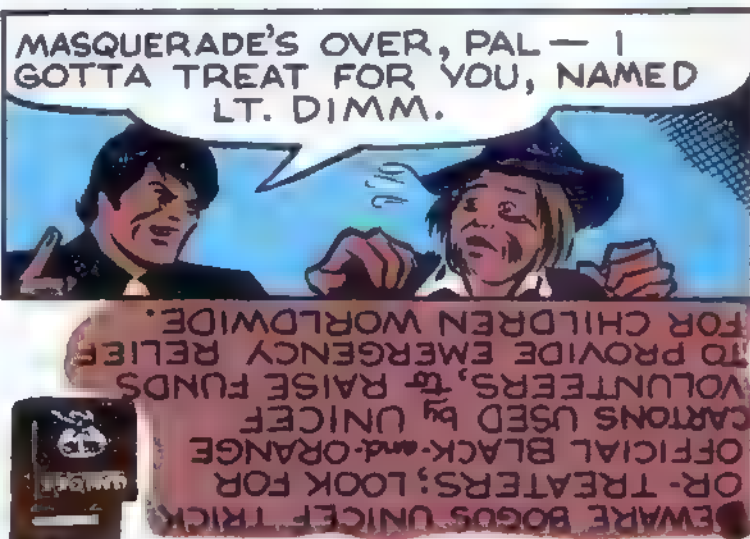
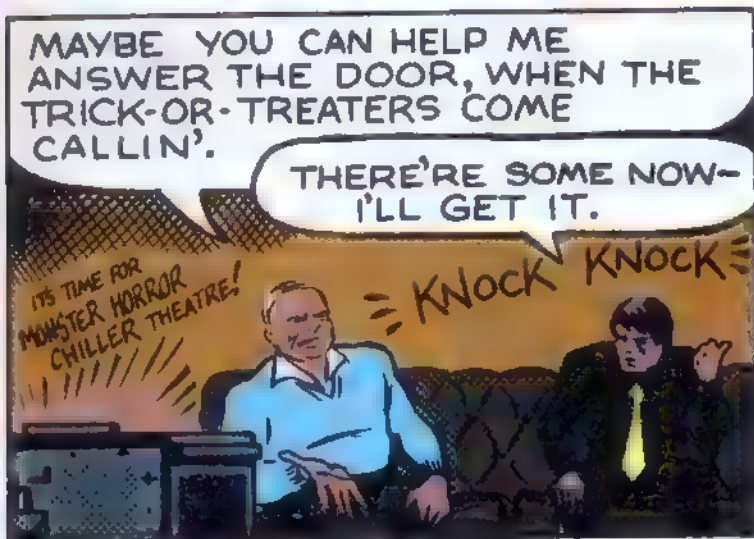
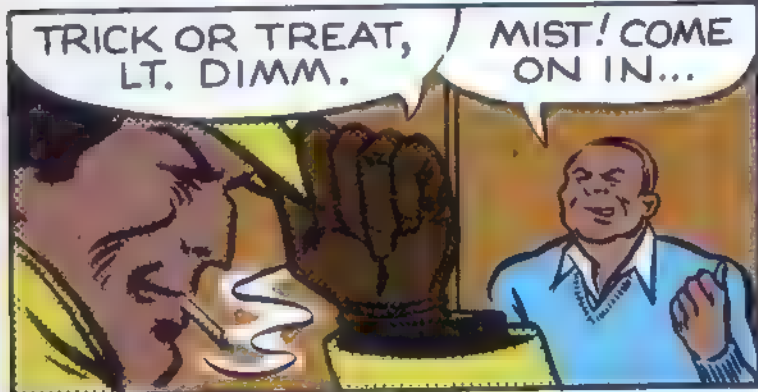


# MIKE MIST

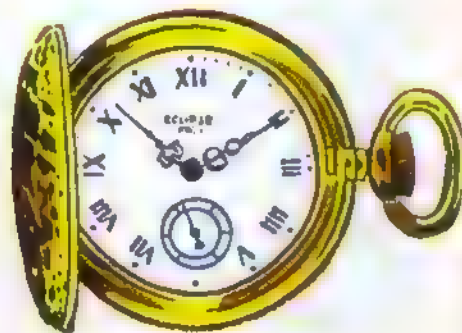
## Trick or Trick

A MIKE MIST/MINUTE MYSTERY  
PRIVATE EYE

©1979 by Collins and Bradley



ORIGINALLY  
PUBLISHED  
OCT. 29, 1979



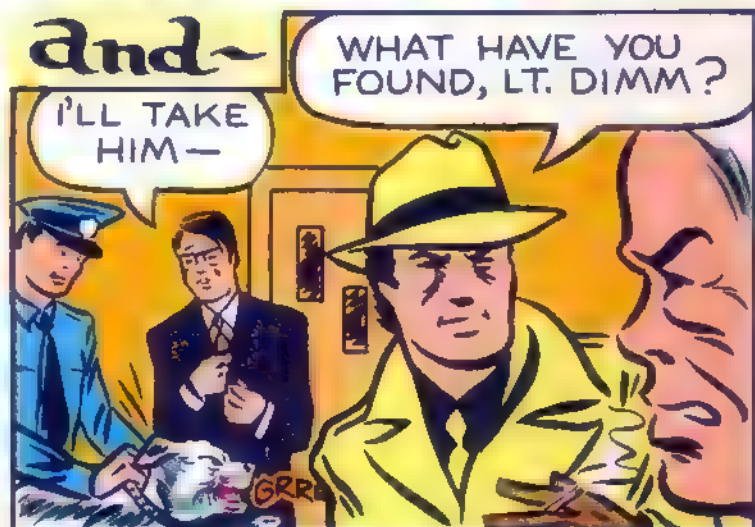
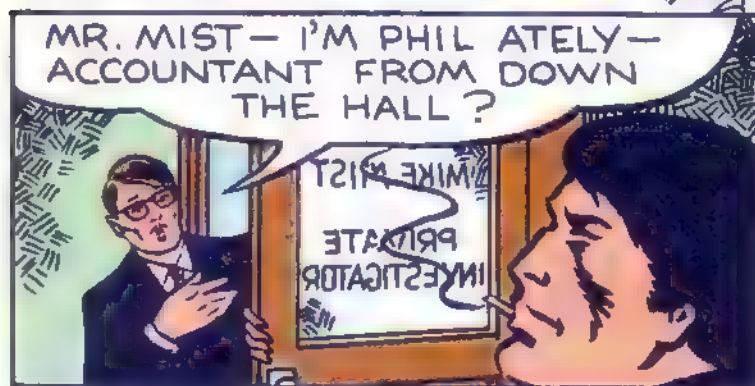


# MIKE

# MIST

## Stamp of Suspicion

A MIKE MIST / MINUTE MYSTERY ©1979 by Collins and Beatty  
PRIVATE EYE



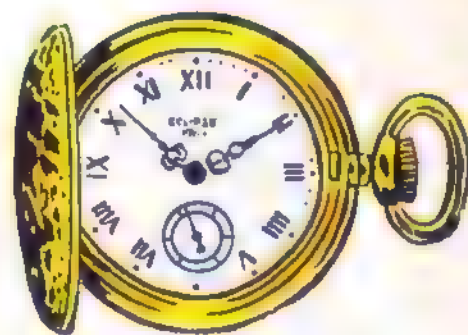
"SAFE, PHONE, WINDOWSILL,  
EVERYTHING WIPED CLEAN  
OF PRINTS —"



LACK OF FINGERPRINTS WAS  
SUSPICIOUS: THE NEIGHBORS  
PRINTS SHOULD'VE BEEN ON  
THE PHONE AT LEAST; ALSO, THE  
DOG WOULD'VE ATTACKED ANYONE  
BREAKING - and - ENTERING.



ORIGINALLY  
PUBLISHED  
NOV. 5, 1979





# MIKE MIST

## Final Chapter

A MIKE MIST  
PRIVATE EYE

MINUTE  
MIST-BRY

©1979 by  
Collins  
and  
Brett



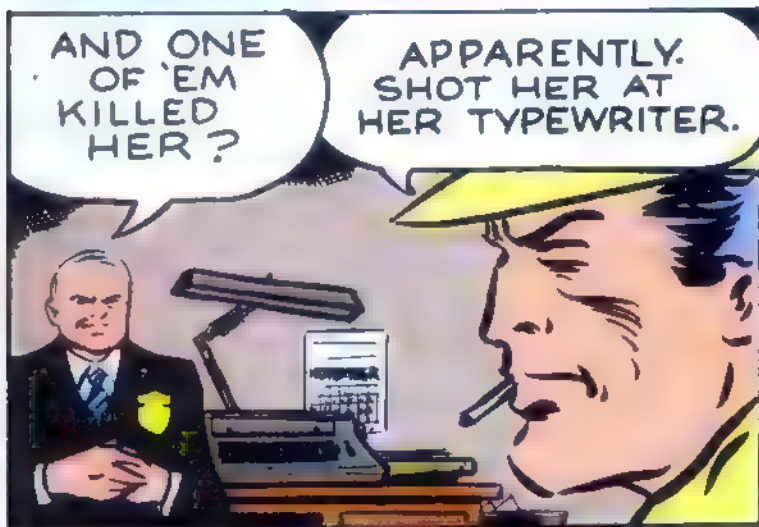
BESS SELLERS—HER BOOK SALES  
NUMBERED IN THE MILLIONS—  
and SO DID HER ENEMIES.

HER NOVELS WERE THINLY  
DISGUISED RE-TELLINGS  
OF SCANDALS IN THE LIVES  
OF MOVIE STARS AND JET-  
SETTERS.



AND ONE  
OF 'EM  
KILLED  
HER?

APPARENTLY.  
SHOT HER AT  
HER TYPEWRITER.



THAT'S  
WHERE  
YOU  
FOUND  
HER?

YEAH—HAD AN  
APPOINTMENT  
TO SEE HER—  
SAID SHE WANTED  
ME TO RESEARCH  
SOMETHING.



WHERE'S BESS—  
WHERE'S MY  
WIFE? WHAT'S  
HAPPENED  
HERE?

I'M AFRAID  
SHE'S DEAD,  
SIR.



WHO DID  
IT?

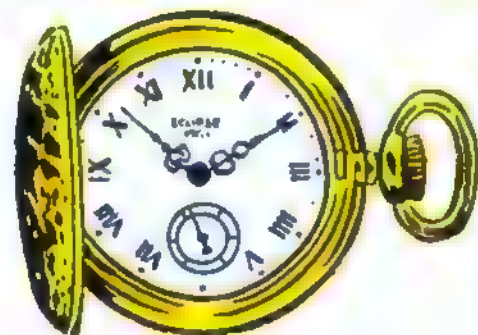
I'D SAY YOU,  
PROBABLY.



WHEN INFORMED OF HIS WIFE'S  
DEATH THE HUSBAND ASKED,  
"WHO DID IT?" SUGGESTING  
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF FOUL PLAY.



ORIGINALLY  
PUBLISHED  
NOV. 12, 1979





# MIKE

# MIST

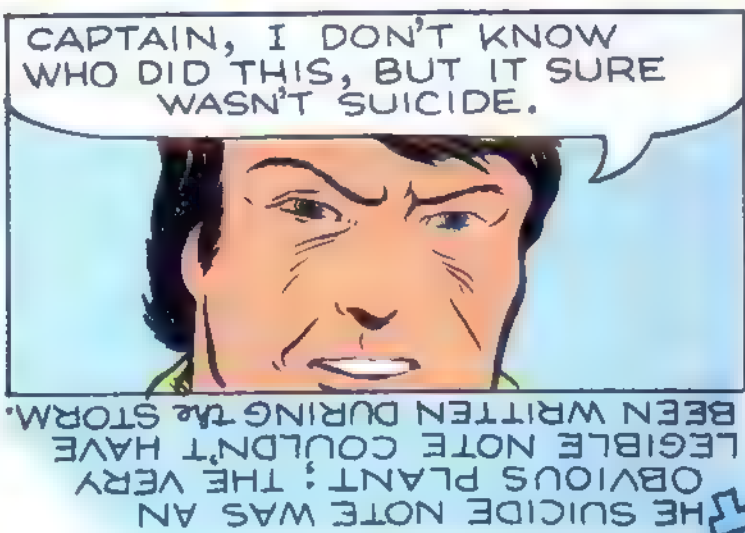
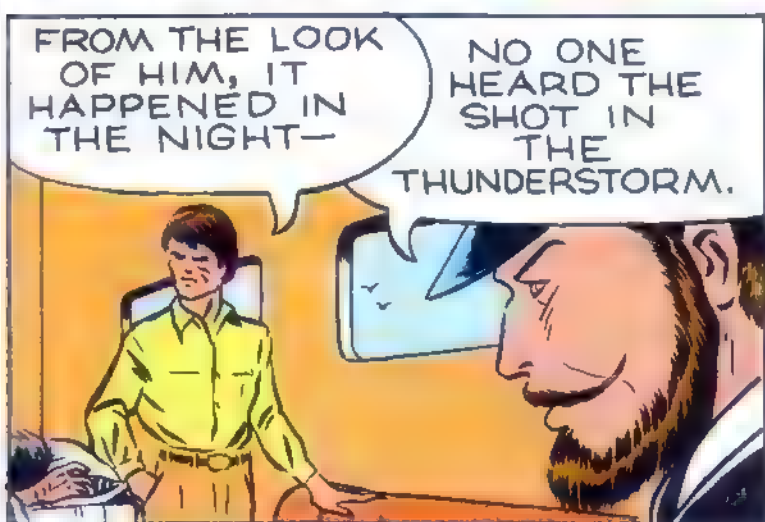
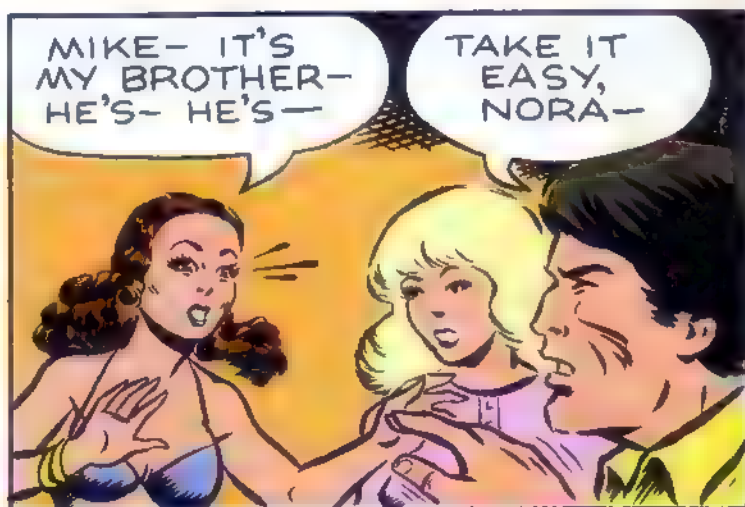
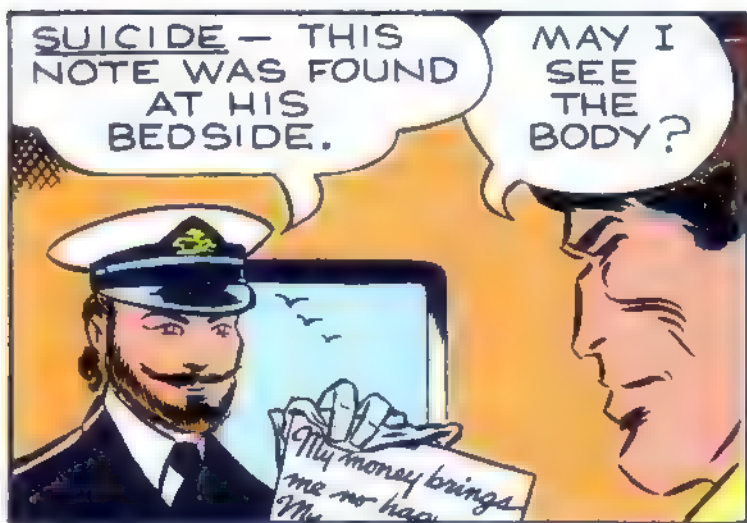
## It Happened in the Night

A MIKE MIST/MINUTE  
PRIVATE EYE/MIST-ERY

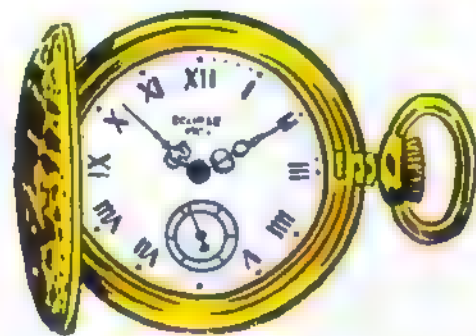
©1980 by Collins and Beatty



A RICH CLIENT, HAPPY WITH MY WORK, INVITED ME ABOARD HIS YACHT FOR THE WEEKEND.



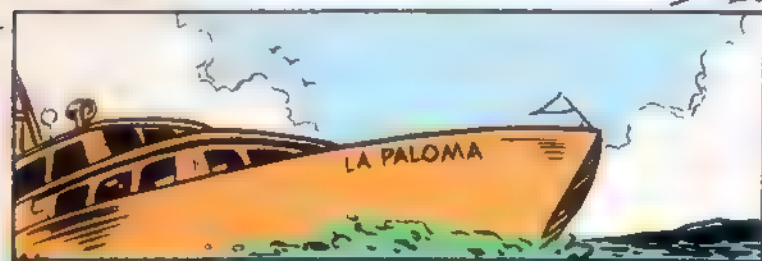
ORIGINALLY  
PUBLISHED  
MAR. 17, 1980





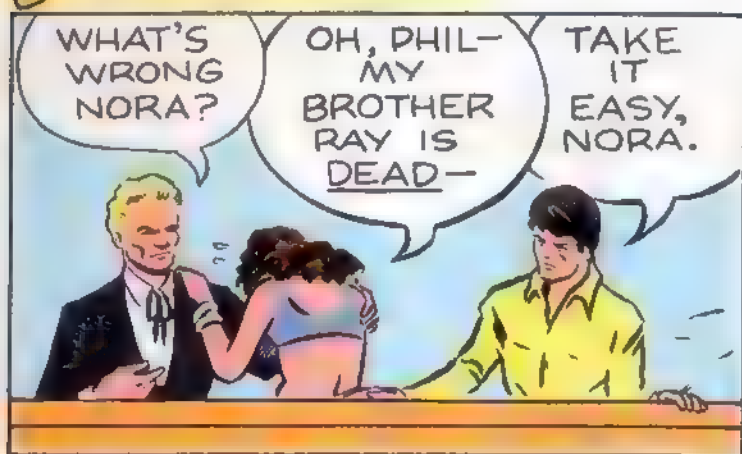
# MIKE MIST

**Murder Cruise** ©1980 by Max Collins and Terry Beatty  
 A MIKE MIST/MINUTE PRIVATE EYE MIST-BRO

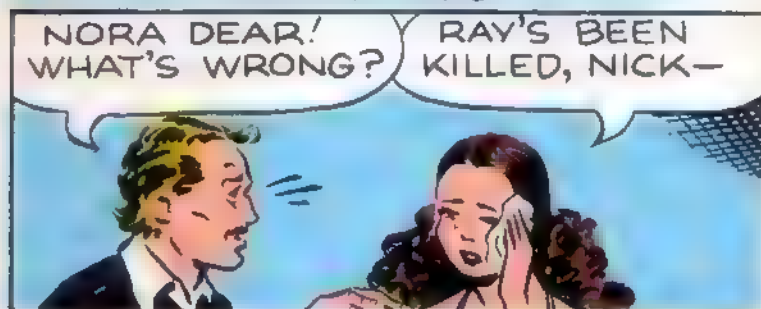


MY CLIENT, PHIL C. LUCRE, INVITED ME FOR A PLEASURE CRUISE ON HIS YACHT—

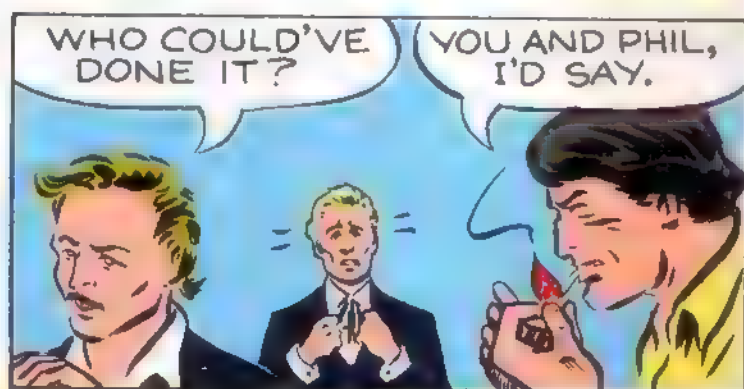
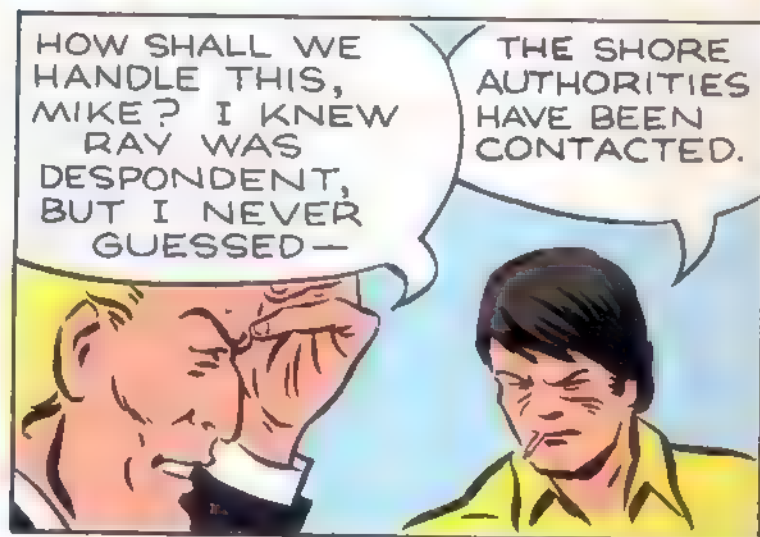
SHORTLY, ON DECK—



AND WHEN NORA'S HUSBAND APPROACHES...



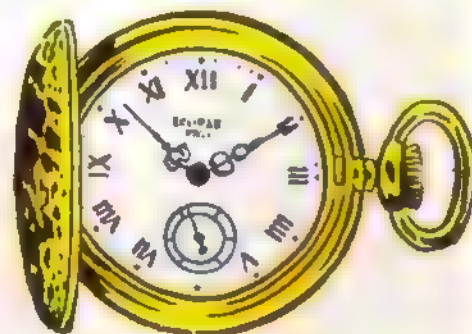
BUT ANOTHER OF HIS GUESTS TURNED UP DEAD—



WITHOUT BEING TOLD, PHIL KNEW ABOUT THE "SUICIDE"; NICK, HEARING RAY'D BEEN "KILLED," ASSUMED FOUL PLAY. (RAY'S FORTUNE WAS WILLED IN EQUAL SHARES TO NICK'S WIFE NORA, and HIS BUSINESS PARTNER, PHIL.)



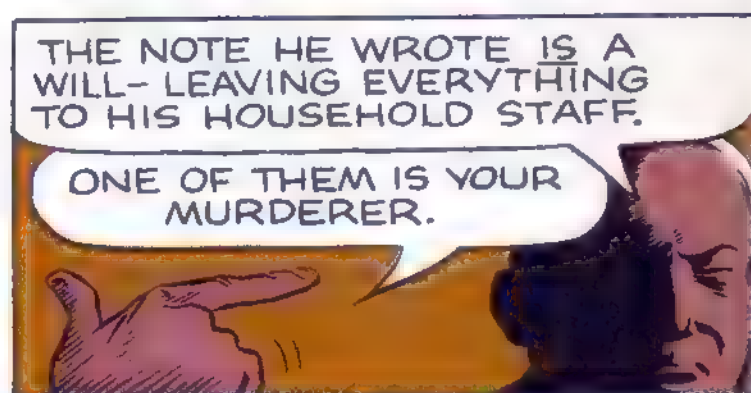
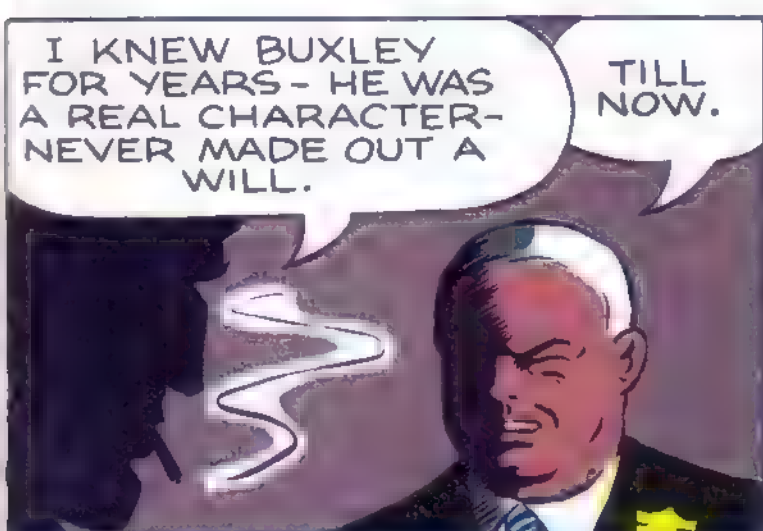
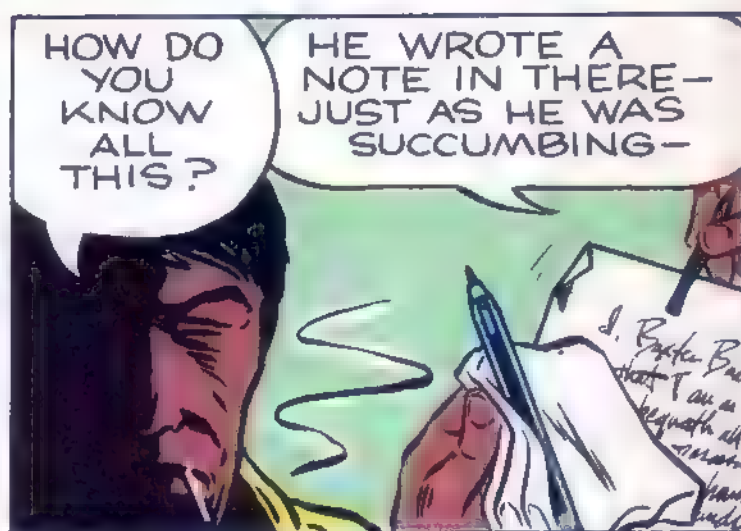
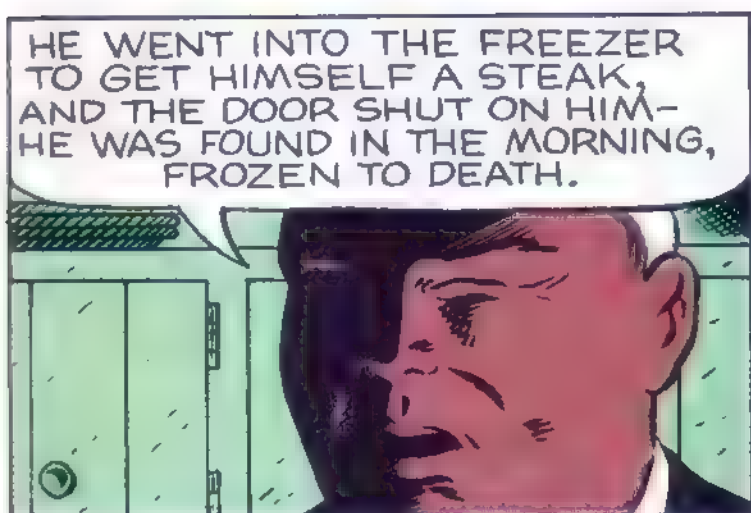
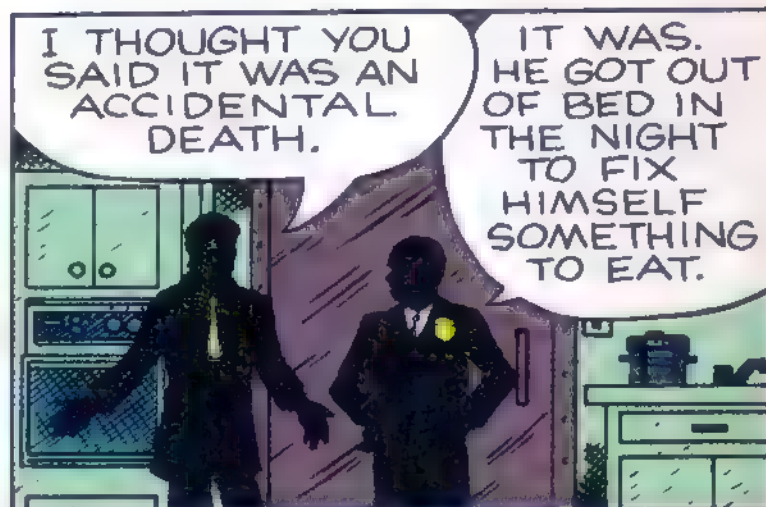
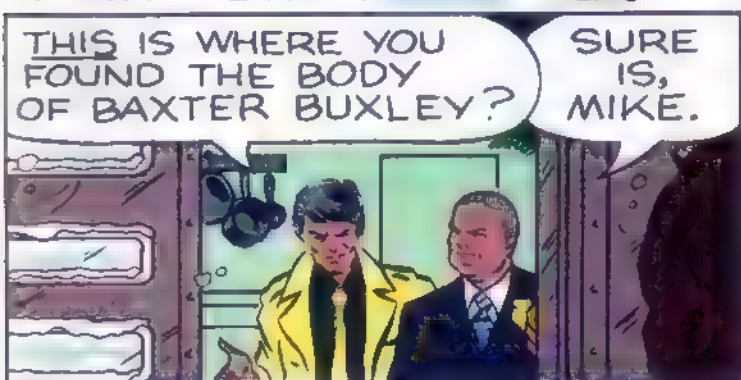
ORIGINALLY  
 PUBLISHED  
 MAR. 24, 1980





# MIKE MIST

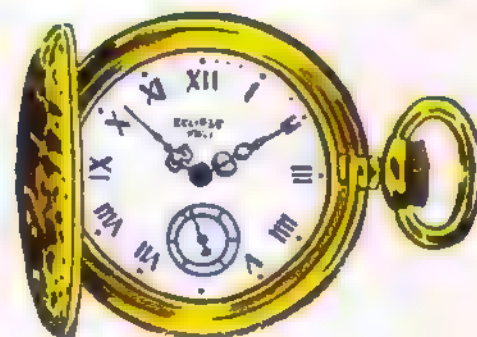
**Chill Will** ©1980 by Collins, B and Peatty  
**A MIKE MIST/MINUTE PRIVATE EYE / MIST-ERY**



THE WILL WAS A PHONY: IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT BUXLEY WOULD CARRY A SHEET OF TYPING PAPER AND A PEN IN HIS PJAMAS!



ORIGINALLY  
 PUBLISHED  
 MAY 5, 1980





# MURDER *at* MOHAWK

PART TWO

A **MIST-TREE** TALE

© 1984

Max Collins and Terry Beatty

IN A SNOWBOUND HOTEL FILLED WITH THE SURVIVING PLAYERS OF A THIRTY YEAR-OLD MYSTERY, FORMER DESK CLERK ELWOOD EPPERLY CAN NO LONGER BE COUNTED AS "SURVIVING"...

MY GOD!  
I'LL GET THE  
MANAGERS—

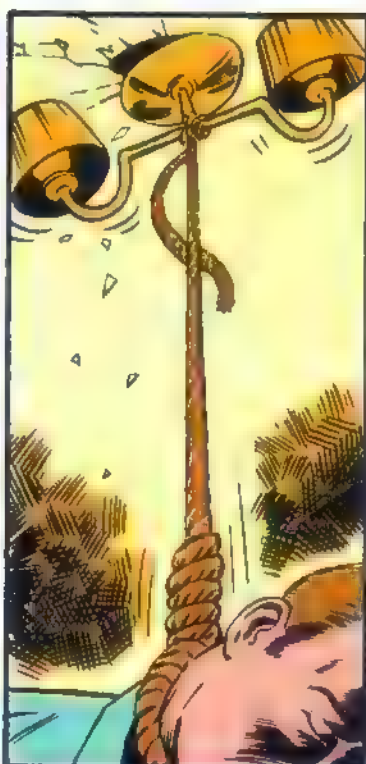
WE'D BETTER  
GET HIM  
DOWN—

NO RUSH—  
HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE  
... LET'S HAVE A LOOK  
AROUND FIRST—

HERE'S THE CHAIR HE STOOD ON—  
AND PRESUMABLY KICKED OUT  
FROM UNDER HIMSELF—

WHY WOULD A MAN ABOUT TO COMMIT  
SUICIDE BUILD A **FIRE**? IT HASN'T  
BEEN GOING LONG— DID HE WANT  
TO BE TOASTY WARM BEFORE HE  
SNAPPED HIS NECK?





**WE** RESTED THE LATE ELWOOD EPPERLY ON HIS STOMACH; THAT HAD BEEN MY SUGGESTION, BECAUSE I'D NOTICED SOMETHING —



WE'D BE LAUGHED OUT OF THE BUSINESS IF WE'D MISSED THIS... THIS IS THE **MURDER** WEAPON — LOOK AT THE BLOOD AND HAIR...



SOMEBODY KILLED HIM WITH THIS PIECE OF FIREWOOD, THEN STRUNG HIM UP AND FAKED THE SUICIDE —



STARTING A FIRE TO BURN THE MURDER WEAPON, AND FIGURING ELWOOD'S WEIGHT WOULD EVENTUALLY PULL THE FIXTURE **LOOSE** —







BESIDES MIST AND ME, THERE WERE NO GUESTS IN THE HOTEL, OTHER THAN THE ORIGINAL CAST OF THE "MOHAWK MASSACRE" — MINUS ELWOOD AND THE LONG-MISSING MASTERMIND KARPER.



AND THERE THEY WERE, DUTIFULLY ASSEMBLED; SELMA AND WHEELS, JAILBIRDS WHO SUDDENLY SEEMED TO BE LOVEBIRDS — DONNA LEE WESTLAKE, NOT OVER THE SHOCK OF SEEING ELWOOD HANGING THERE — AND THE MANAGEMENT, ABIGAIL ADDAMS AND HER BROTHER DICK STARKE, SHOWING THE STRAIN OF LOSING A GUEST IN THE OFF-SEASON.





YOU REMEMBER ELWOOD EPPERLY —DESK CLERK HERE WHEN THE KARPIS GANG CHECKED IN AT THE MOHAWK AFTER ROBBING THE GRANTWOOD BANK. WELL, ELWOOD, AS YOU MUST KNOW BY NOW, HAS CHECKED OUT.



BY THE WAY, I'M MIKE MIST —A DETECTIVE EMPLOYED BY MS. WESTLAKE, WHO ANTICIPATED SOME PROBLEMS FROM YOU NICE FOLKS, FROM HER DIGGING INTO THIS OLD CASE.



AND I'M MICHAEL TREE — ALSO A DETECTIVE, COINCIDENTALLY. AT MOHAWK TO RELAX — SO LET'S RELAX, SHALL WE?



"WE'RE SNOW-BOUND, AFTER ALL, " I REMINDED THEM. "AND YOU WERE ALL CONTACTED IN ADVANCE BY MS. WESTLAKE, WHO, I UNDERSTAND, PROMISED FUNDS FOR YOUR COOPERATION —"



—IN ATTEMPTING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT **REALLY** HAPPENED AT THE MOHAWK THE NIGHT AFTER THE GRANTWOOD HEIST, WHEN ALL THAT MONEY **DISAPPEARED**—

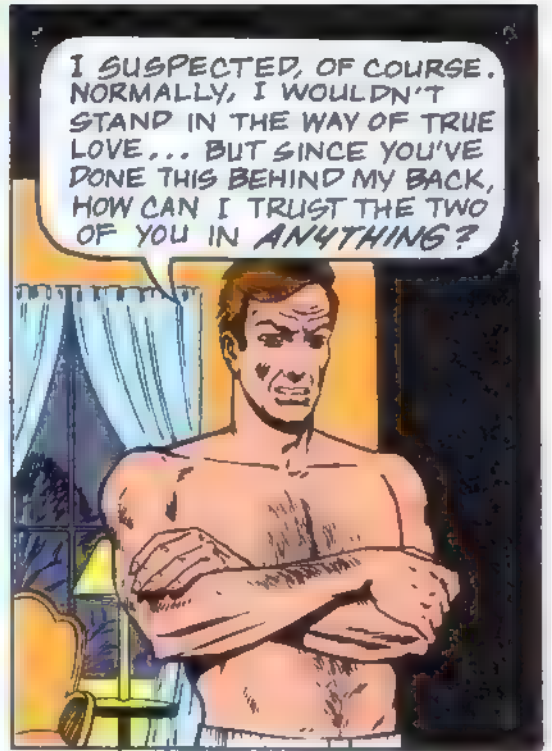
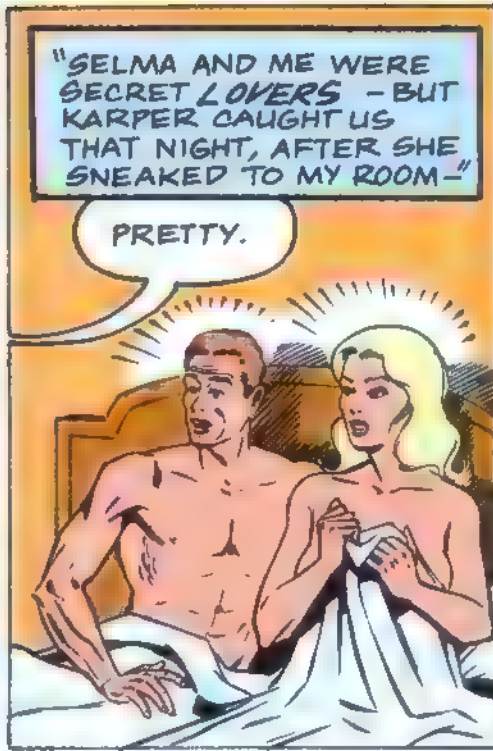
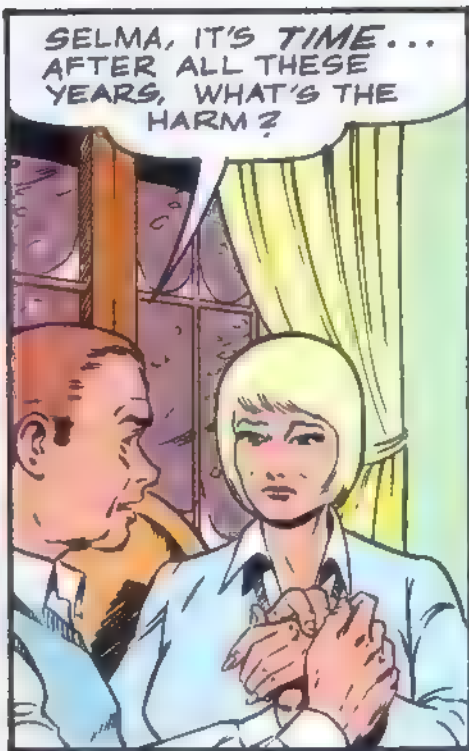


I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED...

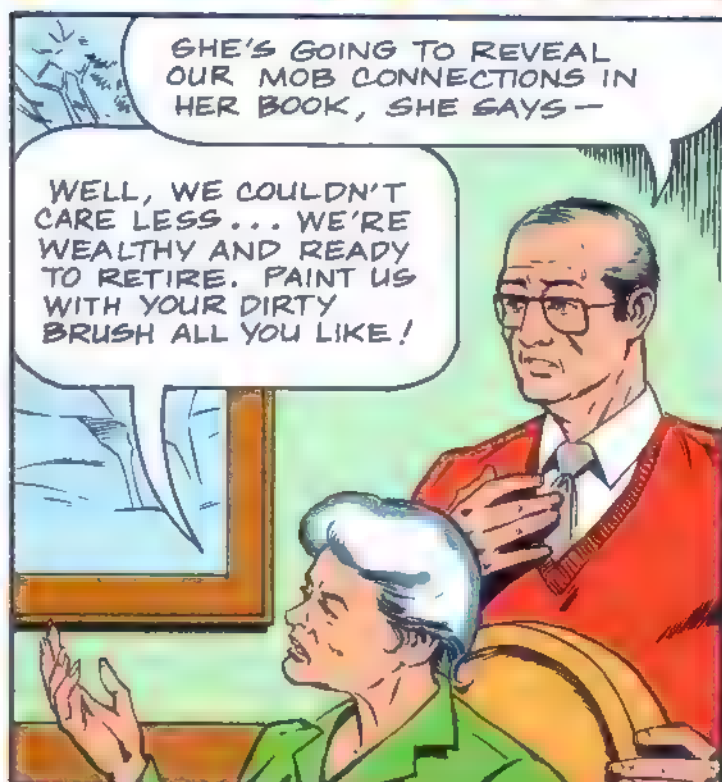
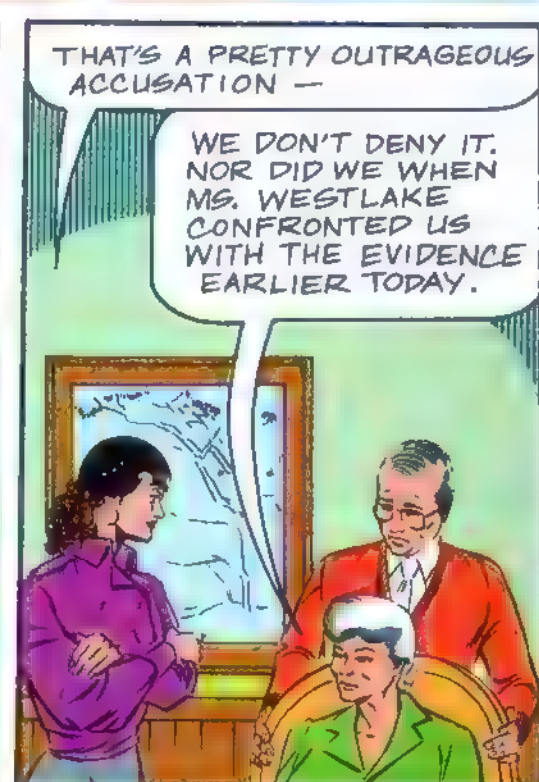
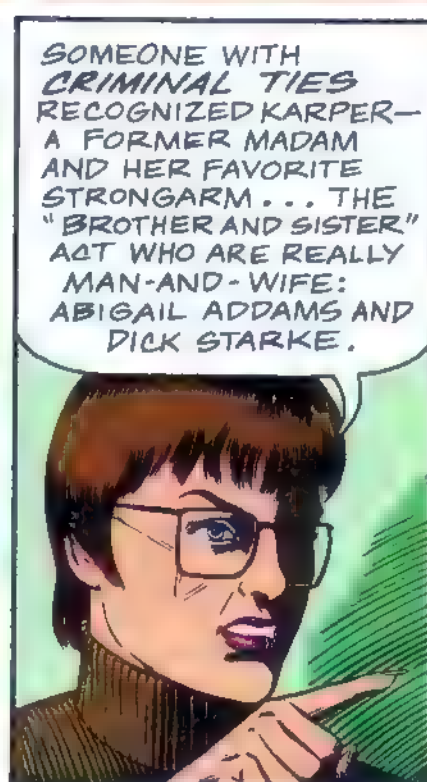
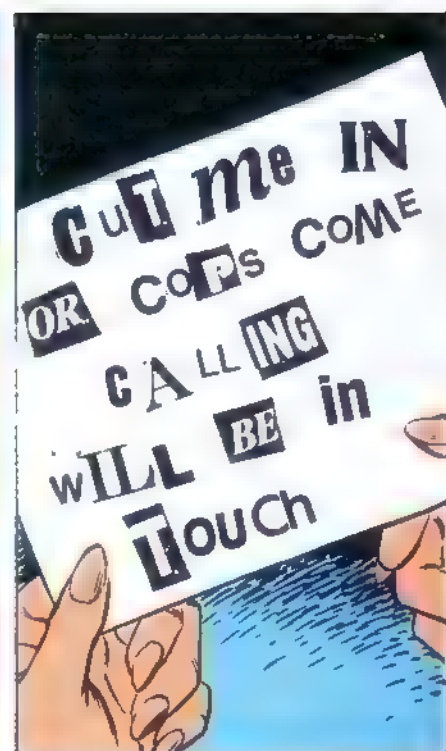
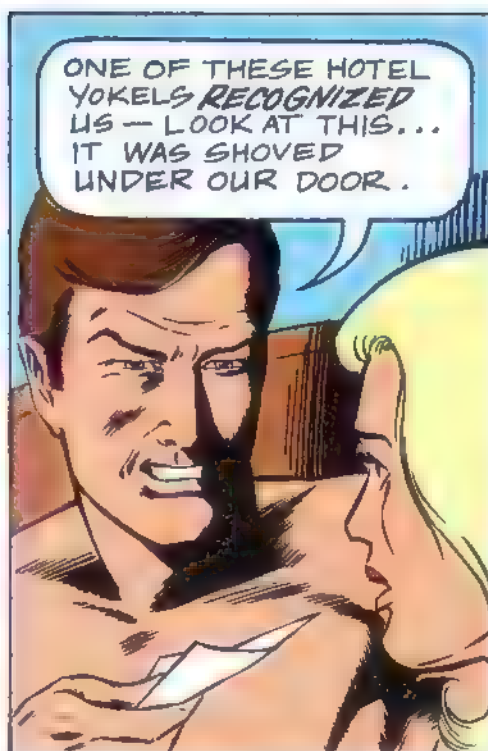
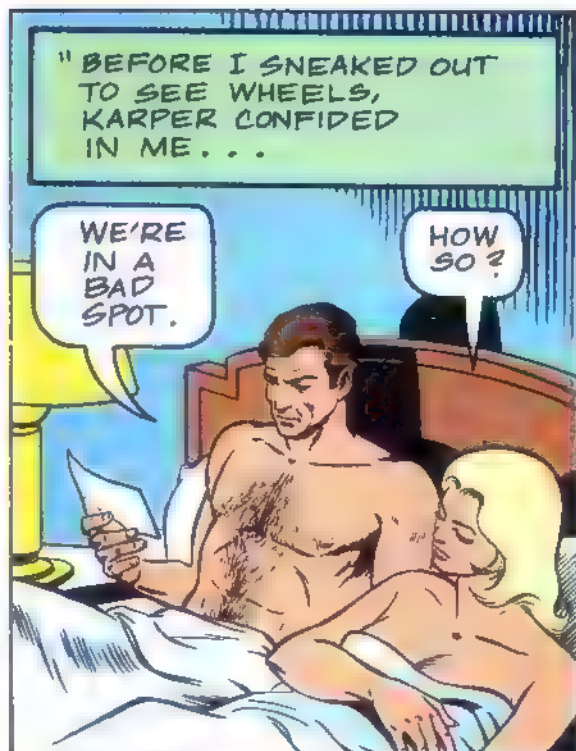
WHEELS, NO!













"BUT WHEN WE SLID A SECOND NOTE UNDER THE DOOR LATER THAT NIGHT, TELLING HIM WHERE TO LEAVE THE MONEY, HE DIDN'T COMPLY —"



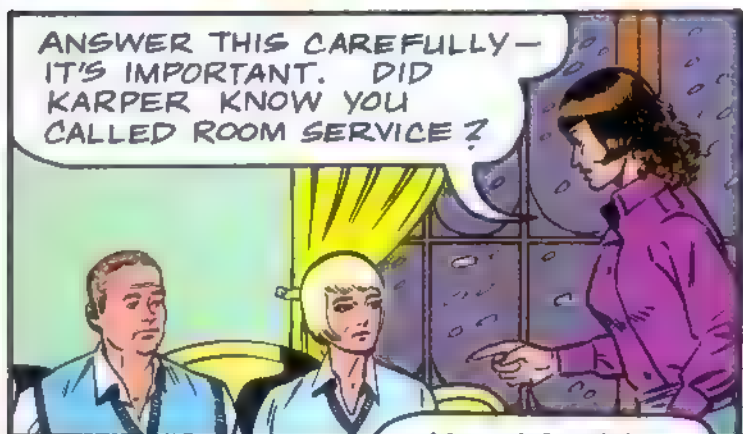
DID ANY OF YOU HAVE ANY CONTACT WITH ELWOOD? DID ANYONE CALL THE FRONT DESK DURING THE NIGHT?



WHY — YES. I CALLED DOWN FOR A BOTTLE OF RUM — IT WAS KARPEN'S FAVORITE. BUT IT NEVER CAME.



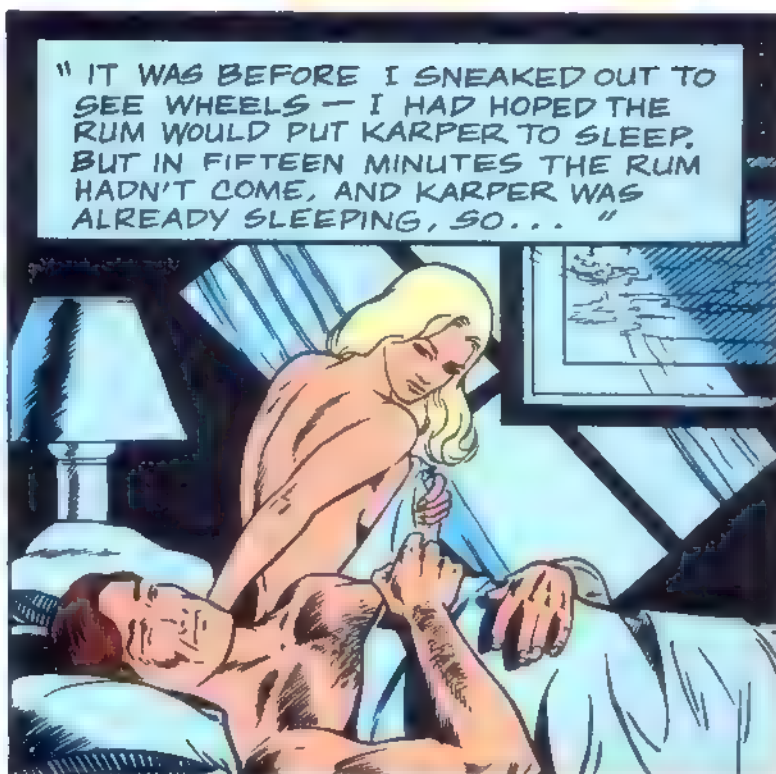
ANSWER THIS CAREFULLY — IT'S IMPORTANT. DID KARPEN KNOW YOU CALLED ROOM SERVICE?



NO — HE WAS IN THE BATHROOM — I WANTED TO SURPRISE HIM.



"IT WAS BEFORE I SNEAKED OUT TO SEE WHEELS — I HAD HOPED THE RUM WOULD PUT KARPEN TO SLEEP. BUT IN FIFTEEN MINUTES THE RUM HADN'T COME, AND KARPEN WAS ALREADY SLEEPING, SO..."



HOW MANY OTHER GUESTS DID YOU HAVE THAT NIGHT?

ER, NONE... WE WEREN'T REALLY OPEN.

YOU WEREN'T? WHY?

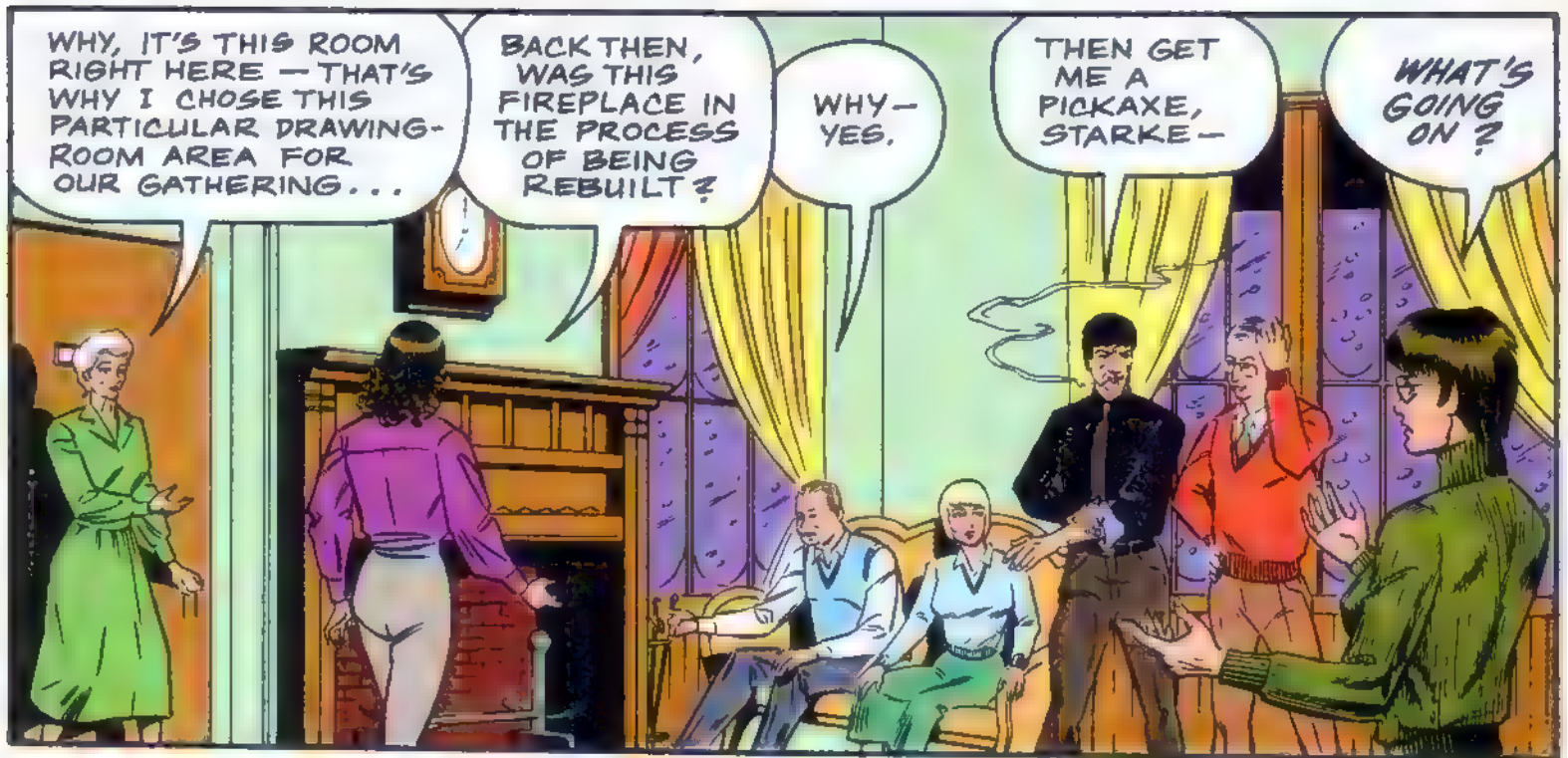


WE WERE RENOVATING — WE PUT IN SEVERAL NEW FIREPLACES, FOR EXAMPLE.

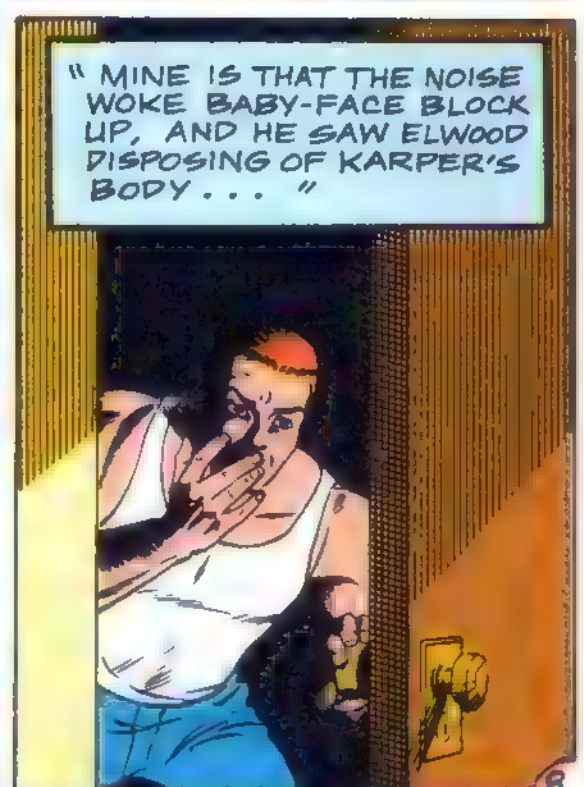
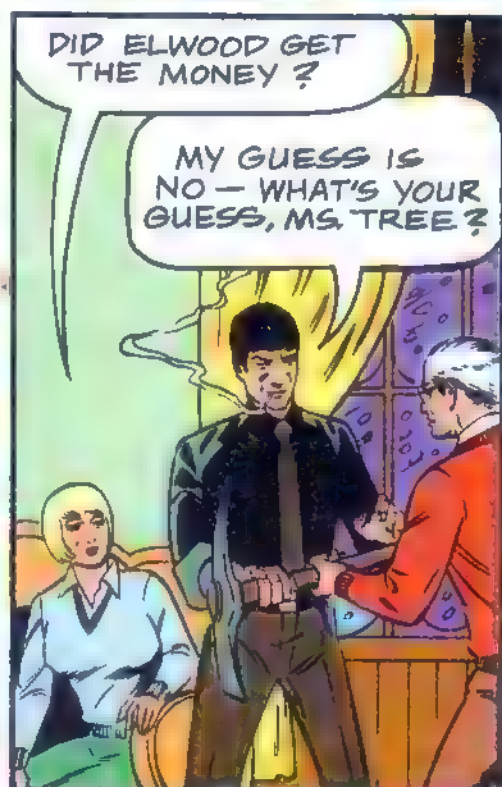
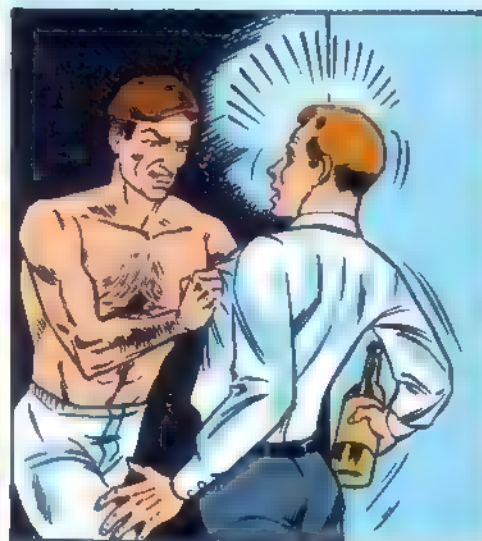
TAKE ME TO THE ROOM WHERE KARPEN AND SELMA SLEPT THAT NIGHT...





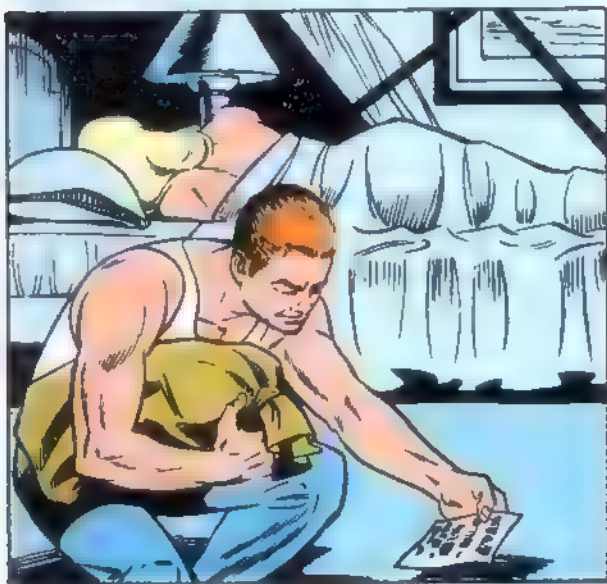


"ELWOOD WAS DELIVERING THE BOTTLE OF RUM — WHEN KARPEN OPENED THE DOOR AND SAW HIM, FIGURING HIM FOR THE BLACKMAILER, KARPEN GOT ROUGH —"



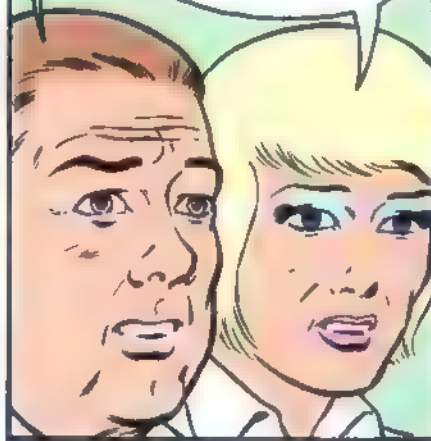


"THEN BABY-FACE TIPTOED INTO THE ROOM—THE DOOR STILL AJAR—WHERE SELMA WAS SLEEPING SOUNDLY—AND HELPED HIMSELF TO THE CASH."



BUT BABY-FACE WAS KILLED THE NEXT DAY!

SO THE PLACE WHERE HE STASHED THE CASH DIED WITH HIM—



I'M GONNA GET STARTED, MS. TREE—THIS WON'T TAKE LONG. TALK WITH MY BOSS, WOULD YOU?



MS. WESTLAKE—SHALL WE CHAT PRIVATELY?



YOU *KNOW*, DON'T YOU—YOU KNOW I KILLED ELWOOD... IMPULSIVELY, ALMOST ACCIDENTALLY; BUT I KILLED HIM.



I DID WITH HIM AS I DID WITH THE OTHERS—OFFERED HIM A SHARE IN THE BOOK'S ROYALTIES IF HE'D TELL ME THE TRUTH.

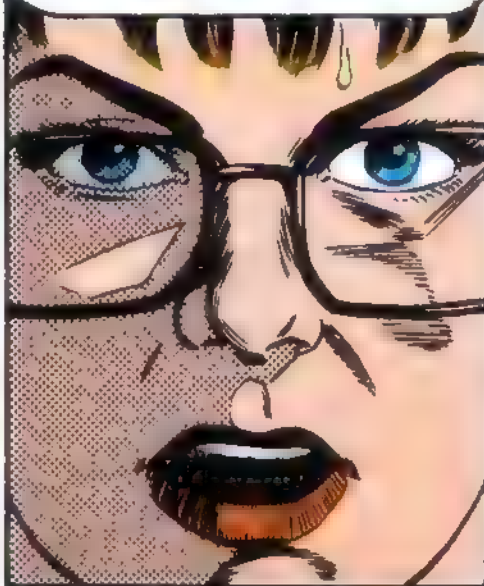


SO HE TOLD YOU THE TRUTH—AND YOU KILLED HIM.

BUT YOU DON'T KNOW *WHY*, DO YOU?



I THINK I DO. I THINK YOU SET OUT TO CLEAR THE LEGENDARY KARPEN'S NAME. I THINK YOU'RE THE HONORABLE THIEF'S DAUGHTER—

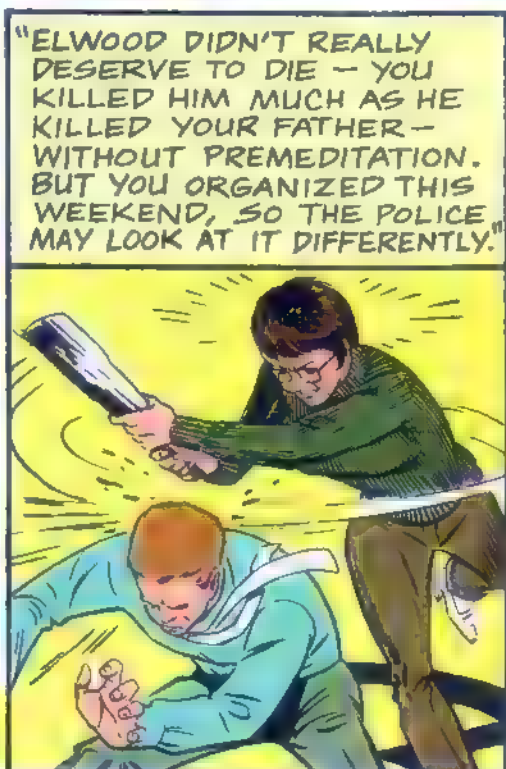


HOW—HOW DID YOU KNOW?

I DIDN'T—MIST FIGURED IT OUT... HE NOTICED YOU CONSISTENTLY REFERRED TO SELMA AS KARPEN'S "MISTRESS"—











Please send your letters to:  
ECLIPSE COMICS  
P. O. BOX 199  
GUERNEVILLE, CALIFORNIA  
95446

### A Word of Explanation

The Mohawk hotel is based (albeit loosely) on a real lodge in upstate New York: Mohonk Mountain Lodge, where every March a "mystery weekend" attracts hundreds of mystery and puzzle fanatics. As a matter of fact, on the morning when reservations are opened for the weekend (months in advance), it proves a sell-out within hours. In March of 1983, MS. TREE writer Max Collins (who is writing this in the third-person for reasons not clear even to him) was a guest for the Mystery Weekend, having been invited by noted author Donald E. Westlake.

Westlake (by way of explanation for those of you unfortunate enough not to be familiar with his work) is widely known for perfecting the comic caper novel (one well-known example of which is *THE HOT ROCK*). Under his own name and various pseudonyms, he's done literally (and literately) dozens of mystery and suspense novels, finely crafted examples of modern crime fiction at its best. Under the name Richard Stark, he has written a series of books about a professional thief called Parker; it is to this cult-spawning (and movie-generating) series that Max Collins generously paid tribute by writing six novels of his own about a similar character called Nolan.

You may notice that this issue's story is dedicated to Don Westlake (and his charming wife Abby, and the Mohonk Mystery Weekend crowd in general). That's because Don in 1983 (and 1984) masterminded the Mohonk Mystery Weekend—the centerpiece of which is a mystery story acted out by the various Special Guests (usually nationally-known mystery writers, like Joe Gores and Max "third-person" Collins) and solved by the paying customers, those mystery and puzzle fanatics mentioned above. In 1983 the mystery was one vaguely resembling the story in this issue; the character portrayed by Max Collins was, at least in this issue's variation on the story, well-hung.

Whether this issue's story is Third-Person's way of saying thanks to Don Westlake—or getting even with him—is a mystery even Ms. Tree and Mike Mist could never solve.

Dear Max and Terry,

Ms. Tree #5.

You know, if I hadn't read a couple of *EXECUTIONER* novels last month I would never have been able to figure out where Ms. Tree got the idea to storm the Muerta place like that. All she needed was about twenty corpses to give it the old Executioner touch. Have to admit I liked the whole business. The party crasher in me, I guess.

Two problems with this issue. Too late to help one, and the other may already be taken care of in the issues yet unread.

A. I thought it was a bit of a pop for Dan to suddenly let us know about this business with Anne. Sure, there was a nice emotional spot there, but what we could have seen if we'd seen something between them would have been even more. Oh well.

B. Ms. Tree isn't wealthy, and tells us so. How can she afford Mr. Hand, then? Is it a case of "Well, I have to"? It's confusing to have them talking about the expense followed by the Tree financial statement followed by her taking him on. Would Socrates be able to put A.B.C.s in front of that train of thought?

Eric Yarber  
ARLINGTON, VA

Probably not without getting run over, but then Socrates doesn't seem the type to read comic books. If he did, he'd write for the Comics Journal, though.

Actually, Eric, if you check back to issue #4, Ms. Tree doesn't say she isn't wealthy: she says she isn't "terribly wealthy." Her agency is a prosperous one, and she is moderately well-fixed. She can well afford to hire someone like Bryan Hand, at least on a temporary basis.

Also, withholding the information about Dan's affair with Anne had to do with, A: planning a little surprise for the readers, and, 2: the self-imposed limitation of our telling these stories in the first person, from Ms. Tree's point of view—which means she can't know about Dan's affair till Dan tells her.

Messrs. Collins, Beatty, Mullaney:

I am very disturbed by the covers on the last two issues of Ms. Tree (#s 4 and 5). I even turned a copy of #5 over, because I was afraid a friend might see the cover.

I've always felt Ms. Tree was a bit anti-feminist. True, you are telling a story about a competent woman in a traditionally male role; but why so much cheesecake?

Despite this, I like a lot of what you are doing. Ms. Tree is an interesting character. You are doing something refreshingly different from most comics. And you are doing a damn good job of storytelling.

But these last two covers go too far. Ms. Tree's attraction is that she is competent. Why show her as helpless on the cover? I dislike it because we have too many images of helpless women; we need images of competent ones. You should dislike it because it is misleading; both covers had a slant very different from the same scene in the story.

You are talented professionals. I'm sure if you try, you can find something better to put on the cover of the magazine than a rape fantasy

Phil Wadler  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY  
England

Like the patient said to the psychiatrist showing him the ink blots, "Don't look at me, doc—you're the one showin' the dirty pictures!" Rape fantasy is in this case in the eye of the beholder—neither of the covers in question seems to us a rape fantasy.

Early on Ms. Tree was glibly dismissed as being a comic book *about* a feminist. We have responded that Ms. Tree is a feminist only in the sense that any strong, intelligent working woman of the '80s is *bound* to be a feminist. She is not a political activist (except where the Mob is concerned). On the other hand, we have never been accused of being anti-feminist before; don't know what to make of that. Cheesecake? Have you ever seen *Kelly Green* or *Somerset Holmes*, or *DNAgents* for that matter? We have been advised by knowledgeable types that Ms. Tree would sell better if we *did* do cheesecake, to which we usually say, Go fly a kite, or other such strong language. If, in context, Ms. Tree needs to take off her clothes, she'll take off her clothes; but she won't soap herself in the shower or try on Frederick's of Hollywood nighties just for the reader's (and artist's) benefit.

We view Ms. Tree as the lead character of the book; as the hero (not heroine). When you put together the cover of a comic book, you examine its contents for possible scenes to showcase. Scenes in which the hero is either being actively heroic or in which the hero is being endangered are the two best options; the only other option, really, is a combination



thereof (in a mystery book, there's also the "discovery of a crime scene" gambit, as on this issue's cover). Our various covers fit into those various slots. Usually Ms. Tree is shown as quite active—for example, on #8 she's actively machine-gunning. Maybe we do have too many images of "helpless women" in our popular culture; but to remove Ms. Tree from dangerous situations on our covers to accommodate that notion would be sexist.

By the way, the cover of #5 was (we thought) an obvious homage to the cover of the bestselling mystery paperback of all-time: *I, The Jury*. Both on the cover and within the story, we did a sex reversal: in *I, THE JURY*, the villainess disrobes to distract the hero; in #6, Ms. Tree disrobes to distract a villain.

We thank you for your comments, Phil—I always wanted to get the last word in a discussion with somebody from Oxford.

Dear Max and Terry,

So far "The Cold Dish" has been a very tasty story. (Sorry, but I couldn't resist the pun.) After issue #6, it's gotten to the point where I am thoroughly puzzled. It's obvious that Dominic Muerta killed Anne for security purposes, and is now covering his tracks, but I have this feeling that there's more to it than that.

One thing I particularly like about this story is finding out more about Ms. Tree's husband, Michael. Not having read "I, For An Eye," I never knew that he was married and had a son before he met Ms. Tree.

Probably the most important event in this story, in my opinion, is Ms. Tree becoming Mike Jr.'s legal guardian. It would indeed be interesting if she retained guardianship of him, but I don't know if that would be the wisest move for her. I just don't picture her as the mother type. Still, I would hate for him to live with his grandparents, because I am convinced that his grandfather is connected with Muerta in some way.

I would like to commend you on the smooth transition between stories. Instead of #4 just beginning a new story from page 1, it wrapped up the loose ends from the first story and quite logically and casually led into the current one. It's little things like that that show your true skill as a writer, Max. Take a bow.

I am anxiously awaiting a trade paperback version of "I, For an Eye"! If you're worried about sales, rest assured that I will buy not one, but two copies. I am all in favor of issuing the various Ms. Tree stories in collected volumes. That would be great!

Now for the last suggestion (or maybe two): how about a Ms. Tree poster, Terry? Or maybe a portfolio?

Mark Pruitt  
SEARCY, AR

Posters and portfolios are certainly a possibility, Mark. Read the "Important Announcement" below and you'll see good news about Ms. Tree collections.

Dear Max,

You know, I think Dan Green and Roger Freemont had a point, however oblique, in *Ms. Tree* #4: it is time, I think, that the series moved away from Mike Tree's murder and the ramifications thereof. Sure, I'm still enjoying the book immensely, and the Anne Tree situation has me hooked and intrigued (albeit reluctantly—I still feel Anne would have been of greater value to the strip as a live supporting character). But the harking-back to Mike Tree's death has dominated the last three storylines, and I think that now you should consider diverting away from this tendency before it becomes a rut.

Howard Stangroom  
CLEVELAND, ENGLAND

Despite my apparent lack of respect for Socrates in a response to an earlier letter in this column, I try to be true to the logic of my stories—I allow one story to lead me into the next. While an occasional change of pace (like this issue's one-shot *Mike Mist* crossover) is fun, we are currently in a

cycle of stories, growing out of one another, that may take years to run its course.

#### An Important Announcement From Max Collins and Terry Beatty . . .

Anyway, we think it's kind of important. This issue is the last Eclipse-published MS. TREE. That, as they say, is the bad news. The good news is that MS. TREE is shifting over to Aardvark-Vanaheim, the Canadian publishing company that Dave Sim and Deni Sim built (using a certain cartoon aardvark named Cerebus as a building block).

We leave Eclipse with a sense of sadness; Dean Mullaney initiated MS. TREE back in 1980 when he called to ask us if we might be interested in developing a private-eye strip for a black and white comics magazine he was putting together. That magazine was ECLIPSE MAGAZINE, and the feature was "Ms. Tree."

Dean was brave enough to publish a feature written by a writer who had never before worked in comic books; whatever following might've been generated by DICK TRACY and mystery novels didn't (and doesn't) necessarily carry over to a comic book. Dean was also brave enough to entrust the art to a young man whose credits were largely in the fan press and the underground field. Launching a private-eye comic book is a sea awash with mutants and long-johns is something we will always be grateful to Dean for.

But with this issue, our contract with Eclipse has run its course. One of the basic tenets behind the formation of Eclipse is creators' rights. Dean had indicated to us that he wanted to continue MS. TREE — but he couldn't guarantee us our own book.

We prefer to continue on in a book of our own, not as part of a another package. A-V is seeing to it that we can do that. We will not miss a beat — the next issue of MS. TREE (no. 10) will appear a month from now, and a new continued graphic novel, "Deadline," will begin.

There will be a few changes that you should be aware of. We will not (at least initially) be in four-color. A-V publishes most of its books — including its star performer, CEREBUS — in glorious black-and-white. MS. TREE began as a black-and-white feature in ECLIPSE MAGAZINE and we have always had an aesthetic preference for it — perhaps because MS. TREE grows out of a film noir sensibility — which is a fancy way of saying Collins and Beatty grew up on old black-and-white crime movies.

Deni Sim (while agreeing with Collins and Beatty's aesthetic leaning toward black-and-white) has indicated that MS. TREE may one day return to color. Initially, though, we're going to do something in-between. Terry has long admired various Japanese and European comics that use a limited color process called duochrome. For the first projected four-issue continuity we will be using this approach — an orange-tinged red, which will give us flesh tones and various shades of orange, red and brown; and, of course, black ink as well. Chapter One, incidentally, will be titled "Black and White and Red All Over."

There are other changes (the only back-up will be a two-page MIKE MIST), as well as a series of trade paperbacks collecting earlier stories, but it seems as though we've run out of space. So we bid a fond farewell to sunny Eclipse and invite all of you aboard our bob sled as we begin the trek toward Canada and Aardvark-Vanaheim.

#### ONE FINAL NOTE by Dean Mullaney

It's been great fun these past few years, working with Max and Terry, and had it been possible for Eclipse to continue this title, we certainly would have. But no matter who the publisher is, MS. TREE is MS. TREE and I urge every one of you to take that bob sled with the guys from Iowa and give MS. TREE your long and continued support. I know that I will.



Next issue:

The new Ms. TREE graphic novel begins.

# "DEADLINE"

by Max Collins and Terry Beatty

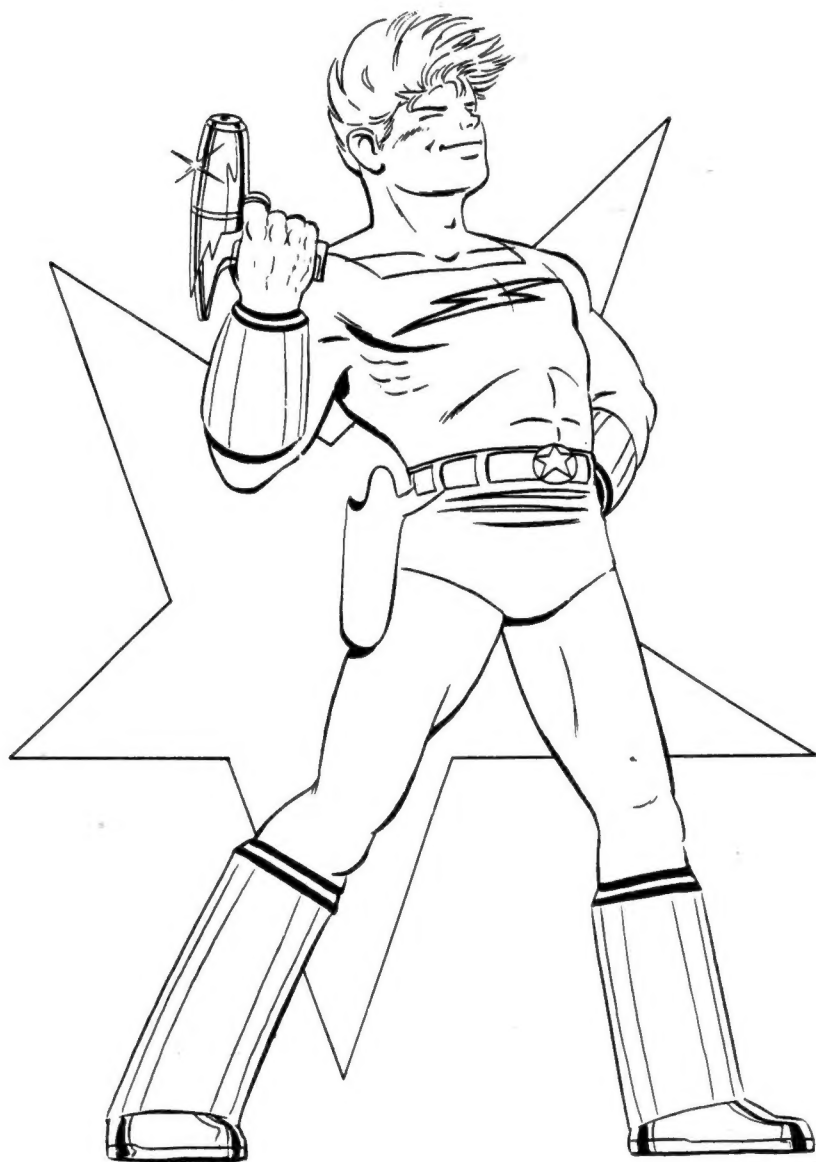


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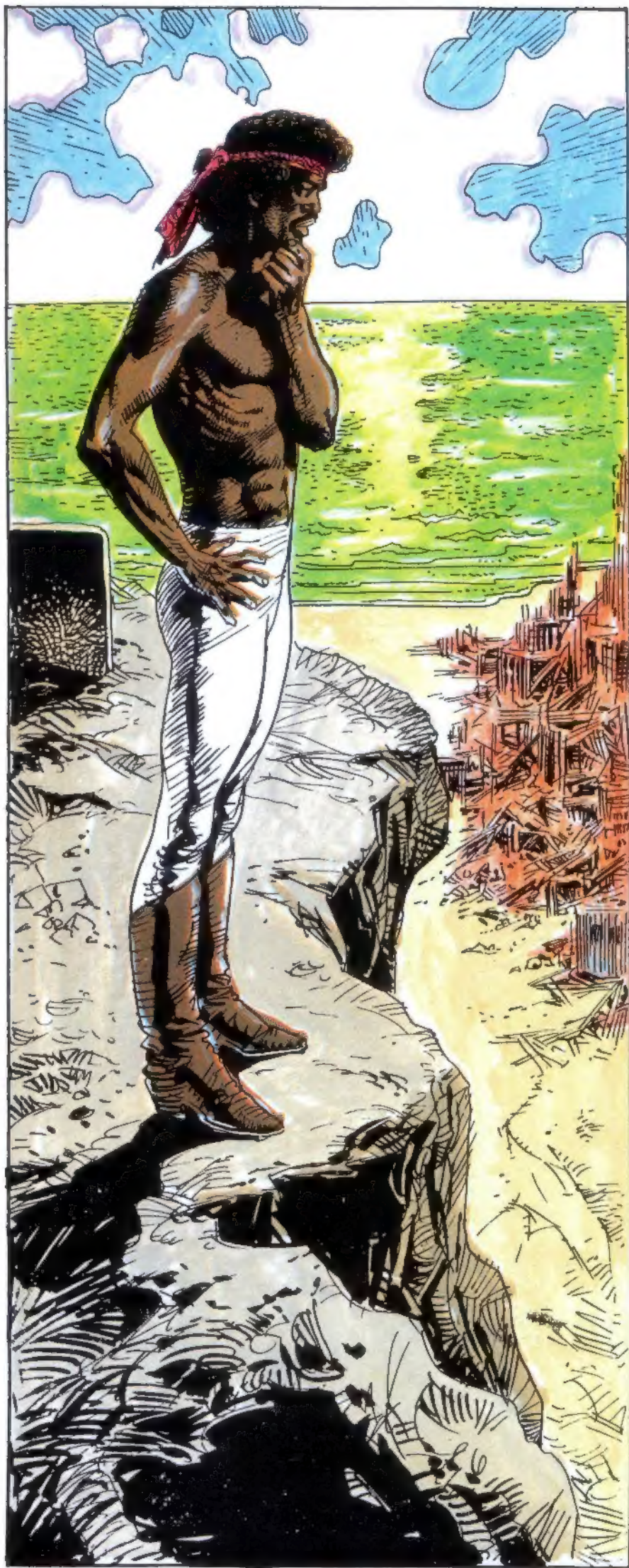
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